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THE WAY TO LIFE.

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Sermons

BY

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TO

THE OFFICE-BEARERS AND

MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN'S FREE CHURCH

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY, GRATEFULLY, AND AFFECTIONATELY

Dedicated by

THOMAS GUTHRIE.

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Man's Great Duty

Lay hold on eternal life.—1st Timothy vi. 12.

On the deck of a foundering vessel stood a negro slave—the last man on board, he was about to step into the life-boat at her last trip. She was already loaded almost to the gunwale; to the water edge. Observed to bear in his arms what seemed a heavy bundle, the boat's crew, who had difficulty to keep her afloat in such a roaring sea, refused to receive him unless he came unencumbered and alone. He pressed to his bosom what he carried in his arms, and seemed loth to part with it. They insisted. He had his choice—either to leap in and leave that behind him, or throw it in and stay to perish. He opened its folds; and there, warmly wrapt round, lay two children whom their father, his master, had committed to his care. He kissed them; bade the sailors carry his affectionate farewell to his master, and tell how he had faithfully fulfilled his charge; and then, lowering the children into the boat which pushed off, the dark man stood alone on that sinking deck—and bravely went down with the foundering ship. Such arms slavery binds; such kind hearts it crushes! A noble and touching example that of the love that seeketh not her

own! yet it shews how the means of salvation may be inadequate to the occasion. So no poor sinner need perish, nor lose eternal life. There is room for all in Christ. Our cry to the perishing, Come to Jesus, Come; "yet there is room."

While there is eternal life in the gospel sufficient for all, none are specially excluded from its benefits. Those only are excluded who exclude themselves, and refuse to be saved on God's own terms. His proclamation of mercy to a lost, rebel world, is clogged with no exceptions. After our brave men had crushed that terrible revolt which some years ago shook our Indian Empire to its foundations, and filled many of our homes with grief, an amnesty was proclaimed, but not to all. Some were by name excluded from its grace; and, as might have been expected, these desperate men fought it out to the last in the fastnesses and deadly jungles of Nepaul. They did not come in to accept the amnesty. There was no reason why they should. It was not for them. Heads of the revolt, and guilty of cold-blooded murders, as well as of the blackest treachery, there was no hope of mercy held out to them; and so, standing to their arms, they resolved to spin out their lives to the last thread, and sell them at the dearest price. What a contrast to this, the gospel! Whatever be men's sins and crimes, none are excluded, by name or by character, from the amnesty which God proclaims, from the benefits of eternal life, "Whosoever cometh unto me," says Jesus, "I will in nowise cast out;" on no account; for no crimes—no depth of guilt—no length of resistance to my gracious offers;

let him come with all the sins on his head which any man ever committed or it is possible for man to commit; let him come in life's last worthless hour, I will not turn away from him—from the vilest, hoariest sinner; I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked—nor am I willing that any should perish, but that all should come to me and live. Thus, though the words of my text are addressed to a man of God, they admit of a wider than their first application; and, therefore, to those that are not, as well as to those that are, men of God, in his great name we address this call, Lay hold on eternal life. There is enough of it to supply the wants of all. No child of Adam stands excluded from its precious blessings.

I. Consider our need of eternal life.

Greatest gift of God! eternal life is deliverance from eternal death, the curse of a broken law, and the doom of a burning hell. Eternal life is eternal blessedness—the pardon of sin's guilt, and freedom from its tyrannous power; the pleasures of a pure heart, and the enjoyment of peace with God; joy without any bitter admixture, and riches without wings; health that never sickens, life that never dies, and a glory hereafter that never fades away; perfect holiness in the likeness, and perfect happiness in the bosom of God. These are what we need; and how great is our need of them?

How great our need, was once well expressed by Rowland Hill. A preacher, who threw his whole soul into his work, he was challenged for the vehemence of

his voice and manner. Unlike some whose dull, cold, unimpassioned manner in the pulpit, led an infidel to say that he doubted whether the preachers themselves believed in a hell, he spoke like a man who saw the people hang over perdition; and heard their long, piercing shrieks, as one after another they lost their hold, and dropped into the fiery gulf. Exception being taken, as I have said, to his energy and vehemence, Hill told how he had once seen a vast bank of earth, below which some men were at work, suddenly rend asunder; and leaving its bed, precipitate itself forward to bury them alive before they could utter a cry, or move a foot to escape. And who then, he asked, found fault with me, because, in my anxiety to save them, my cries for help were loud enough to call the neighborhood to the rescue, and be heard a long mile away. Left there, they perished, miserably perished—needing what God, not man, always is, "a very present help in trouble." The moral of the story is very plain. These poor men, buried below a mass of earth, gasping for air, choking for want of breath, in instant danger of perishing, did not stand in greater, nor so great, need of strong arms to dig them out, as all men do of eternal life.

Sin has brought death into this world; and we are all of us involved in the calamity—buried in the ruins of the fall. We may not have sinned as others have done; that is very possible. But in vain the Pharisee thanks God that he is "not as this publican;" in vain the self-righteous, shrinking from the touch of some low and loathsome outcast, says, Stand aside, I am ho-

lier than thou. Ah, pity rather than pride is the feel ing with which the best men regard the worst ; conscious, as they are, that they would have been no better than others, had they been left to themselves, and exposed to as great temptations ! All by nature lying under the same sentence of condemnation, pride, which is not for angels, still less befits felons—those whose crimes have brought them to a common prison, and doomed them to a common death.

But, though we have sinned less than others, we cannot be saved by merit ; even as, thank God, though we have sinned more than others, we may be saved by mercy. How idle to talk of other men being greater sinners than we are—to flatter and deceive ourselves with that ! He drowns as surely who has his head beneath one inch of water, as he who, with a mill stone hung round his neck, has sunk a hundred fathoms down. Let the strain of the tempest come, and the ship that has one bad link in her cable, as certainly goes ashore to be dashed to pieces on the rocks, as another that has twenty bad. It is, no doubt, by repeated strokes of the woodman's axe that the oak, bending slowly to fate, bows its proud head and falls to the ground, and it is by long dropping that water hollows the hardest stone. But those who speak of great and little, of few or many sins, seem to forget that man's ruin was the work of one moment, and of one sin. The weight of only one sin sank this great world into perdition ; and now all of us, all men, lie under the same sentence of condemnation. Extinguishing every hope of salvation through works, and

sounding as ominous of evil in men's ears as the cracking of ice beneath our feet, or the roar of an avalanche, or the grating of a keel on the sunken reef, or the hammer that wakens the felon from dreams of life and liberty, that sentence is this—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

Such is our position; and instead of shutting our eyes to it, like the foolish ostrich that hides her head in the bush when the hunters are at her heels, it is well to know and to face it. We are either lost or not lost. If not, by all means "sleep on and take your rest." I should be sorry to disturb you. If the waves dance and play round your ship as she ploughs through a silver sea; if gentle zephyrs fill her sails; if no sound is heard but the song of the watch on deck, and the gentle dash of mimic billows as they break on your bows, lulling to slumber and happy dreams; then, happy voyagers, with a bright moon riding the calm heaven above, and wide sea-room below, "sleep on and take your rest." But if, instead of this, a shock has come that makes your ship shiver from stem to stern, if hurrying feet tread the deck overhead, if signal guns are flashing and booming through the darkness, if the rattling cordage tells that they lower the boats, if men, pale with fear, rush into the cabin to cry, We sink; and if, when we leap from bed on the floor, the water, rushing through many a yawning seam, splashes on our naked feet, the time is not for sleep—but for instant action, and such cries as this, O sirs, what shall I do to be saved! Who can miss the application of this to

our condition? With that curse of a broken law impending over us, in danger of perishing every moment so long as we are out of Christ, how should we cry, Save me, I perish; and give immediate heed to the call, that Christ, seeing our danger, rises from his throne in heaven to sound down, Lay hold of eternal life.

II. Consider how we obtain eternal life.

Nothing in one sense more difficult, yet in another easier—a wish, a word, a look, and it is ours! I have read the story of a captive who, immured in Austrian prison, with no tool but a nail in his bleeding hands wrought night by night for twelve weary months, to mine its solid walls. Agitated by alternate hopes and fears, he at length accomplished his task; and then, on a dark, blustering night, by means of a rope that he had twisted, he swung himself over the dizzy depth; and, reaching the ground, swam the moat, and was free! What will a man not do, and not dare, for dear life and sweet liberty! But for eternal life—for the precious liberty of the sons of God, you have no such time to wait; nor hardships to suffer; nor desperate risks to run. You have only to wish, and, as if struck by a magician's rod, the walls of your prison house open. You are free.

During long years of care, and fears, and harassing thought, how do many toil for wealth; to be rich! And how often do their efforts fail! and, even when they have succeeded, how have we seen fortune, in a fit of caprice, suddenly desert her favorite; and his riches take themselves wings and flee away! But

now, at this very moment, far happier than any worshipper of Mammon, you may enrich yourselves with wealth such as the fairy wand of old story never gave its possessor—when, only waving it, the dust of the road changed into gold, and the fountain, in place of water, sent up a jet of precious stones; every liquid drop, as it leapt into the air and fell back into the marble cistern, turning into a diamond, or ruby, or pearl. Again, what tortures have I seen people patiently endure, through a long protracted illness, to regain in health heaven's best earthly boon? But you have only to join the crowd, like the woman of old, to press through the throng, and lay your eager, trembling finger on the dusty hem of a Saviour's robe, to possess a health that never sickens; and is proof alike against the sharpest arrows of disease, and the dart of death. Again, see yonder, amid the smoke of battle and in the throat of the deadly breach, how an ambitious soldier, bleeding from many wounds, fights his way upward to win an earthly crown! wins it, but lives not to wear it. He is just seen on the top of the fire-girdled battlement; he has just time to wave his bloody sword; and ere his less fortunate comrades have time to envy him his honours, the mark of a foeman's rifle, he is struck through the heart; and, reeling back, falls headlong from the heights of fortune into the ditch below—dead as a stone. But you have no such risks to run; no such dangers to face. In the quiet house of God—there or anywhere else—now—at this moment—you have only to reach out the hand of faith, and it grasps the crown; a crown of glory that fadeth

not away. One short step carried the thief, and may carry you, from eternal death to eternal life. So near at all times are we to heaven or to hell. What a solemn position!

Do you ask, What shall we do to inherit eternal life; to be saved? I reply with Paul, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; but reject him whom I offer, and you may be damned,—lost this hour, and lost for ever. The gift of God, say the Scriptures, is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He purchased it for us by his sinless obedience, his sufferings, his atoning death. For that great end his infant head was pillowed on straw, and his dying head on thorns; for that great end, his lowly cradle was a manger, and his death-bed was a bloody cross; and what it cost him so much to buy, his Father is ready to bestow "without money and without price." He gives it for the asking; nay, more, much more than that, rare thing in the experience of the poor and needy, he presses his bounty on our acceptance.

On these streets, I have seen the poor hanging on the steps of the rich, and refusing to be ordered away; to move pity, laying bare their sores; and holding out their skinny hands to implore men's charity. But whoever saw the rich following the poor, with a hand filled with gold; pressing money on their acceptance; stopping them; entreating, beseeching, imploring them to take it? Yet thus, to the amazement both of angels and devils, God does with you, in offering his Son; and through him, the gift of eternal life. The truth is, he knows how wretched our fate if we refuse his mercy.

He has looked on the fire that never has been quenched; he has heard the wail of those that are for ever lost; and as a father over his poor prodigal, a mother over her fallen daughter, he yearns over you—crying Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.

III. Consider more particularly what we have to do, to obtain eternal life.

Do! It is not to make ourselves worthy of it; nor to attempt to merit it; nor to wait till we are holy before we come to Christ. Salvation is not of works, but of faith. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life—this is a faithful saying." We have nothing to do then, but to believe; to open the door and receive him into our hearts, who is knocking there. Jesus is ready to come in, as a king into his palace—followed by penitence, humility, goodness, meekness, temperance, hope, peace, joy, charity; a long, shining train of graces. It is only by the hand of faith that we can lay hold of Christ. Do you say, But I cannot believe! I reply, true! you cannot of yourself, for, No man, says Jesus, can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him. Still, if you ask faith of God, he will certainly give it; working it in you by the power of his Holy Spirit. For what argument is at once so unanswerable, and so

comfortable as Christ's. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Thus, by the aid of the Spirit, and through the exercise of faith, you are to lay hold on the Saviour; and laying hold on him, though it were in the hour of most imminent destruction, and in the very jaws of death, you lay hold of life—of eternal life.

In his voyage to the Polar Regions, Kane, when involved with his brave companions among broken ice fields, found himself placed between two mighty, moving bergs. Each a towering, floating mountain of ice, they rapidly approached to give battle—threatening to crush his ship between them, like an empty shell. The danger was imminent; destruction seemed inevitable. There was not a breath of wind to fill their sails; and their ship, as if herself paralyzed with terror, lay still on the water—waiting her doom. At that moment of terrible suspense, when no power of theirs could extricate them, or clear their way through the ice that choked the only path of escape, just then, a low, water-washed berg, set in motion by some strange current, came driving up from the southward. If they could follow in its wake, it might make a way for them through the floating ice; and they might yet be saved—plucked from the very jaws of destruction. Their despair was now turned into hope. It nears them; it is passing them. They seize the opportunity; and, God blessing the attempt, succeed in planting an anchor on its slope—holding on it by a whale line.

"It was an anxious moment," says Dr. Kane, "our noble tow-horse hauled us bravely on; the spray dashing over his windward flanks, and his forehead ploughing up the lesser ice as in scorn." The two great ice mountains, whirling on their axes, and roaring, grinding through the sea, encroach on the ship as it advances; they drew nearer, and still nearer, to each other; the channel is now narrowed to forty feet; another moment and their fate is sealed. With the promptitude of sailors, they fly to the rigging and brace the yards to clear the ice-walls. They pass clear—saved as by the skin of their teeth; and "never," writes Dr. Kane, "did men acknowledge with more gratitude their merciful deliverance from a wretched death." A striking story; and yet but an imperfect illustration of our salvation from eternal death, by laying hold on Christ. He comes from heavenward; a Saviour in our great peril, and hour of need. By your faith lay hold on him; by your hope cast anchor on him; and you are saved. Through the raging wrath of God; through the perils of temptation; through the closing jaws of death, he will open you a triumphant way; till, safe in heaven, with harp in hand, and more gratitude of heart than the rescued seamen, you "acknowledge your merciful deliverance" from a more than wretched, even from eternal death.

IV. Consider when we are to lay hold on eternal life—

When—but now? If the body is in great danger and means of safety and escape are offered, there is no occasion to press them on men; to cry, lay hold on

life, or say, do it now. In such circumstances, how does a man improve each moment, and clutch at life? I only wish I saw people as eager to be saved from hell, as I once saw a man to be saved from drowning. It was at yonder ferry. Procrastination, the ruin of souls, was almost his death. The time was up; the bell was rung; the gangway withdrawn; the boat in motion; when, after too many delays, he came running along the pier, and, deaf to the cries of warning, took a bold and desperate spring to catch our bulwark. He caught it, but lost his hold; fell backwards; and went down instantly—engulphed in the roaring sea. Sucked out by the receding wave, he rose to the surface a good way off. And though it was a blessed sight to see his head emerge from the water, every eye was still anxiously fixed on him. He floated on his back, but could not swim; and therefore must soon perish. And he had perished; but that then one, bearing a life-buoy aloft in his hand, came rushing down the pier at the top of his speed. Anxiety was now wound up to the highest pitch. Shall he save him? He stops; and with the spray of the stormy sea flying in his face, takes aim; now he bends like a bow; and then, rising to the spring, with herculean arm he sends the life-buoy spinning through the air, away over the waves, to the drowning man. What a moment of suspense for him; for us—the on-lookers! Well thrown by man, and well directed by a watchful providence, it fell right over his sinking head. With what joy he caught it! How he laid hold of it! Never lover embraced lover with such eager, happy

arms. I saw him holding on, pulled from a watery grave; and thought, Would God, that poor sinners, that every man ready to perish laid hold as eagerly of eternal life? I gave God thanks that he was saved! He might have been damned if he had been drowned. Besides, I rejoice to think how happy that night his wife and children to have him safe at home; and how bright the home which held a living father, rather than a widow stunned with grief, and children weeping by a cold, livid corpse.

But would you now lay hold on Christ, all the angels in heaven would sing, and all the bells in heaven would ring as the glad tidings were told, and your Father cried, Prepare a mansion, make ready a crown! for this my son that was dead is alive again, that was lost is found.

"Thus joy abounds in paradise
Among the hosts of heaven,
Soon as the sinner quits his sins,
Repents and is forgiven."

In the name of him who purchased it, and offers it, and urges you to accept of it, I intreat you to lay hold of eternal life. He promises it now—to-day; but not to-morrow. The angels hovered, on wings of astonishment, over a Saviour's lowly cradle, and around his bloody cross; may they not be as much astonished to see a man refuse a crown of glory as they were to see the Son of God wearing the crown of thorns? Oh, what would the damned, the devils give for the offer which you hesitate to accept of? Why destroy your

souls? Why scorn the love of Jesus? Why provoke a loving and long-suffering God to say, My spirit shall not any longer strive with that man—his blood be on his own head—he is joined to his idols, let him alone.

> Happy day, happy day,
> When Jesus washed my sins away.

Happy day this, indeed, were you to lay hold on eternal life now! His head lies on a downy pillow whose heart is at peace with God. Light, be it orphan's or widow's lot, that of poverty, or bereavement, or disappointment, is the heaviest cross, sweet the bitterest cup, and calm in life's stormiest hour, the soul of him who has his sins forgiven—having laid hold of eternal life. Accept it then so long as it is in your offer; seize it so long as it is in your reach. Scatter money in a crowd, how they scramble for it; offer bread to the starving, how greedily they seize it; throw a rope to the drowning, how he eagerly grasps it! With like eagerness and earnestness may the Spirit of God help you to lay hold on Christ; and, having got hold of him, to hold on—till, amid a crowd of saints ready to receive you, you are brought ashore, safely landed in the heavenly kingdom.

The World a Lie.

"Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off."—Hosea viii. 5.

"He walked in the ways of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."—"Howbeit, from the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, he departed not."—"He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." So, ringing changes on "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," runs the history of successive kings in Israel. Thus, while some men live in their good deeds, and like a beautiful insect, or a delicate moss preserved in a mass of golden, aromatic amber seem to lie embalmed in the memory of their worth others live in their sins. So did this Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. His sins were the salt wherewith he was salted.

His history is most instructive. It illustrates the folly of those who count it a matter of indifference what is the religious character of rulers, whether supreme or subordinate. It shews us how one master mind can tell on the minds of others; and how a man's soul leaves its impress, like a thing stamped in wax or struck in iron, on the soul of a nation; and how that

impression will remain long years after his body is mouldered into dust. The truth is, that no man or woman, however poor their circumstances, or mean their lot, are without their influence ; like an electric spark passing from link to link, that runs flashing down the chain of successive generations. Indeed, a man's life is as immortal as his soul ; and by its influence though dead, he yet speaketh and worketh. For example : Have you family worship ? You have. I congratulate you. But why have you this altar ? Your father had it ; and his father had it ; and so, succeeding to this heir-loom, in a sense, and in part, at least, you owe the ornament and palladium of your house to some remote ancestor of whom you know nothing at all. Thus men live after they are dead. Outliving our memory, and more enduring than any monument of brass or marble, our example may prove like the circle that rises round the sinking stone, and, growing wider and wider, embraces a larger and larger sphere, till it dies in gentle wavelets on the distant beach. It reaches a distant shore ; your example a distant time.

Take care, then, how you live—warned by the story of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, to whose case my text alludes. Other things besides consumption, and lunacy, and various maladies our flesh is heir to, are hereditary. Example of that, Jeroboam's sin descended to his children ; and was transmitted like an entail from sire to son. More than that, it stuck like the malaria of a virulent disease to the very walls of his palace ; it infected all his successors, and from the

throne spread its deadly influence to the poorest and most distant cottages of the land. His sin is set before us in the text; but before applying these words to ourselves, let me

I. More fully explain the expression, "Thy calf, O Samaria," or, O Israel, "hath cast thee off."

Jeroboam was a servant of Solomon. One day—for what purpose and on what errand we are not informed—he left Jerusalem; and on reaching a lonely part of the road, was met by Ahijah the Shilonite. Suddenly the prophet seized him; and laying hold of a garment that he happened to wear that day for the first time, rent it in twelve pieces—Jeroboam's surprize, and reverence for the man of God, perhaps, preventing him offering any resistance. Of these he gave ten to the astonished warrior, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee; because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth, and Chemosh, and Milcom, and have not walked in the ways of my servant David; and I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel; and it shall be if thou wilt obey and hearken unto all that I command thee, and keep my statutes, and my commandments, I will be with thee and make thee a sure house." Having said so, Ahijah vanished. Well, time rolled on, bringing many changes with it; and among others, Solomon died, and Rehoboam, his son, occupied—not filled—his father's throne.

The son of a wise man, of the wisest of men, he was himself a fool. To support the splendour of his father's reign, the people had been ground down by heavy taxes; and tired of the burden, they embraced the opportunity of a change of government to say to Rehoboam, "Your father made our yoke heavy; make it lighter." They desired, and indeed demanded a reform. Disaffection was abroad; a storm was brewing in the political atmosphere; and the crisis had come that required a calm head, and a clear eye, and an iron hand at the helm of the state. But a blind pilot stands at the wheel. Rehoboam is not the man for such a time. Turning his back on his father's grey-haired counsellors, he had surrounded himself with hot-headed, inexperienced youths; and listening to their advice, he returns the people this insolent, this insane answer, "My father made your yoke heavy, I will make it heavier; my little finger shall be heavier than my father's loins. He chastised you with whips, I will chastise you with scorpions." Madman! he flung a flaming torch into a magazine of combustibles. No wonder at the result! Lashed into fury by this contemptuous refusal of their demands, the nation rose in rebellion—crying, "To your tents, O Israel; David, see to thy house!" They burst asunder the bands of authority; and leaving only two tribes to stand by the house of David, the other ten broke away; and bore Jeroboam forward to the throne of Israel on the grand, resistless wave of a popular revolution. The hour, and the man had come. Ahijah's prophecy was fulfilled.

The great English dramatist says—

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

So Jeroboam found; very soon found. For he was hardly seated on the throne, when a political difficulty arose—and that a very serious one. The Mosaic law required every male to go up three times each year to Jerusalem. An astute and sagacious politician, Jeroboam foresaw how this custom might be attended with dangerous results. He thus reasoned, If the people go up three times a year to Jerusalem—the place, not only of the temple, but of Rehoboam's palace and family—when the blush of my popularity is over, and the fervour of their zeal abates, then, as a river returns to its ancient bed, this fickle multitude may return to their first love; and deserting me and mine, once more attach themselves to a house around which so many noble and patriotic associations are clustered.

Jeroboam was not the man to meet this difficulty aright. A stranger to the faith which is as a best bower anchor to Church or State in a roaring storm, he yielded to that "fear of man, which bringeth a snare." He did what, no doubt, the world had thought a clever thing. Setting up one calf in Bethel, and another in Dan, in opposition to, and in imitation of the cherubim, he sent forth this edict: "Let him that sacrificeth, kiss the calves"—go and worship these. He hoped thus to succeed in arresting the tide of worshippers that would otherwise have set towards Jerusalem year by year. He did succeed. Fatal success! It brought down ruin on his house and government, and was followed by results which should teach our statesmen—whether

they manage affairs at home or abroad—that no policy in the end shall thrive which traverses the word of God; that that never can be politically right, which is morally and religiously wrong. Jeroboam and his family learned this to their cost. The clever policy by which he was so dexterously to escape a difficulty which he ought to have met in faith and cast on God, not only failed, but ruined his short-lived dynasty, and brought down God's heaviest judgments on an unhappy land. Hardly had his son taken his father's place, when Baasha rose and hurled him from the throne; and with that thirst of blood which to this day marks the oriental, this upstart slew every man, woman, and child belonging to the royal family. There was not a living creature spared that had a drop of Jeroboam's blood in his veins. And then, amid the silence that reigned over this scene of ruthless massacre, the voice of God in providence was heard, saying, "Thy calf, O Jeroboam, hath cast thee off!"

What the "calf" did to the monarch, it did to the people—here called Samaria. Following the steps of their king, they apostatized from God, and turned their backs on his temple. Then judgment succeeded judgment; and one trouble breaking on the back of another, the land had no rest. The commonwealth sank beneath the weight of its idolatry. I have seen a rock so rent and scattered by some vehement explosion, that not a fragment of it could be found. So was this great kingdom rent asunder. The ten tribes were scattered abroad; and though they have been sought east, west, north, and south, all the wide world over, there is no

certain remnant of them now found on the face of the earth. A broken, bleeding band, they left the land of Israel to go into banishment, and be lost for ages or for ever; and over the two idols that they left behind without a solitary worshipper at their deserted shrine, again the voice of God in providence, might be heard saying, "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off."

II. Let us now make a practical use of these words; and by way of warning and instruction, I observe,

1. That the sentiment of my text is illustrated by the case of those who put riches in the place of God.

You have seen a piece of iron drawn to a magnet; now what that magnet is to iron, gold is to many. It exerts an omnipotent, at least an irresistible attraction over them. Let the news go forth of the discovery of a country where the veins of the mountains are filled with gold, and the streams roll over golden sands—the glad tidings of salvation have seldom made such a stir. The land may be distant; its soil poor; its climate inhospitable; its inhabitants a race of savages—it does not matter. Sudden farewells are spoken, families are broken up, and the tenderest ties are rudely rent asunder; the roads are crowded with eager emigrants; and under press of sail ships race on the high seas, striving which first shall touch the golden strand. Men that would have pronounced the hardships they have to suffer intolerable at home, pour in eager crowds upon the scene. They toil, and scheme, and dream of gold; and in the lust for gold, humanity, virtue, and piety are swallowed up—as in a roaring

whirlpool. But why go to the gold-fields of California and Australia, to seek in such distant regions illustrations of my remark? They may be found nearer home. Are there none of us—are there not many, as well in quiet, rural scenes as in busy cities, whose sole ambition is wealth, who are hasting to be rich? theirs the old cry, the complaint of the grave that, though often gorged with the banquets of battle-field and pestilence, still opens its great, black, greedy jaws to cry "Give, give, give."

The thirst for gold, like the drunkard's, is insatiable. The more it is indulged, the more the flame is fed, it burns the fiercer. These worshippers of Mammon being determined to be rich, have no time for prayer-meetings; they have hardly time for closet prayer; and of money, they have none to spare, certainly nothing more than their "mite," as they call it, for the poor heathen abroad, or the poorer heathen at home. No doubt they pity the lone widow; this poor, thin, ragged child; that orphan boy. Touched by the hunger that looks out of their hollow eyes, and appeals to some lingering feelings of better days, they would give; but ah! they must save money—grow wealthy—die as rich as that man, or accumulate a fortune as great as this. Slaves! Year by year they must save a certain sum, come what may; and go without bread or education who may, they must hoard up wealth. See yonder lake! The bigger the stream that runs into it—lying so beautiful and peaceful in the bosom of the shaggy mountains—the bigger the stream it discharges to water the plains, and, like the path of a

Christian, wend its bright and blissful way on to its parent sea. But in sad contrast with that, the more money some men gain, the less they give ; in proportion as their wealth increases, their charities diminish. Have we not met it, mourned over it, and seen how a man, setting his heart on gold, and hasting to be rich, came to resemble a vessel with a narrow, contracted neck, out of which water flows less freely when it is full than when it is nearly empty? As there is a law in physics to explain that fact, there is a law in morals to explain this. So long as a man has no hope of becoming rich ; so long as in enough of bread to eat, of raiment to put on, of health and strength to do his work and fight his honest way on in the world, he has all man really needs. Having that, he does not set his heart on riches. He is a noble, unselfish, generous, large-hearted, and, for his circumstances, an open-handed man. But by success in business, or otherwise, let a fortune come within his reach, and he clutches at it—grasps it. Then what a change! His eye and ear, and hand close ; his sympathies grow dull and blunt ; his heart contracts and petrifies. Strange to say, plenty in such cases feeds not poverty but penuriousness ; and the ambition of riches opens a door to the meanest avarice.

To what good all this? How often have I thought of riches, when intruding on their lone domain. I have seen a covey of wild fowl, from the reeds of the lake or the heather of the hill side, rise clamorous on the wing, and fly away! Has not many a man who hasted to be rich, and made gold his god, lived to

become a bankrupt, and die a beggar!—buried among the ruins of his ambitious schemes. "I have put a nail into the wheel of fortune," was the boastful exclamation of such a man. God in heaven heard it; put his hand upon the wheel; and, flying round, it hurled the vain boaster in the dust. But grant that some seem to have got the secret how to put a nail into fortune's unsteady wheel; what then? Money is a good thing; but it is worth, not wealth, that commands respect. I bestow that on him who applies money to noble purposes; and heartily subscribe to the saying, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver or gold."

Money, no doubt, is a power; but a power of well-defined and narrow limits. It will purchase plenty, but not peace; it will furnish your table with luxuries, but not you with an appetite to enjoy them; it will surround your sick-bed with physicians, but not restore health to your sickly frame; it will encompass you with a cloud of flatterers, but never procure you one true friend; it will bribe into silence the tongues of accusing men, but not an accusing conscience; it will pay some debts, but not the least one of all your debts to the law of God; it will relieve many fears, but not those of guilt—the terrors that crown the brows of Death. He stands as grim and terrible by the dying-bed of wealth as by the pallet of the poorest beggar whom pitiless riches has thrust from her door. And when death, seizing him by the throat, has flung the worldling on his back, and, lying on the edge of

the grave, he finds "all is vanity" that he has toiled and sinned for, and his hold relaxes and the world slips away from his grasp, and he falls back, shrieking, into a lost eternity, this voice comes sounding from the throne of God, "Thy calf hath cast thee off."

2. The sentiment of my text is illustrated by the case of those who live for fame—for the favour, not of God, but of men.

The fragrant rose and the stinging nettle, though plants of very different properties, may grow side by side in the same soil. Even so, though the love of money and that of fame are different passions, both are "of the earth, earthy"—the latter, parent as it has been of many brave and noble deeds, being not less than the former a thing of earth. And how does all history, sacred and profane, ancient and modern, shew what a capricious divinity he worships who courts the applause of men; on what a precarious footing he stands who is a popular idol!

Look, for example, at our Saviour, who had his day of popularity, and was crowned with unsought honours. Yesterday the streets were thronged with thousands who, as they attended Jesus' progress, rent the air with shouts of Hosannah! hosannah to the son of David! To-day the wind has shifted. Through the streets of Jerusalem rolls the same crowd: the voices are the same: the object of their attention and cries the same: but while yesterday it was Hosannah! to-day it is, Crucify him! crucify him—away with that fellow to the cross! With the same stage and actors,

how different the scene! Yesterday it was a brilliant triumph; to-day it is a bloody tragedy.

From David's Son turn back now to David himself. Look at that gallant, modest youth—his cheek flushed with the excitement of the fight, and blushing deeper crimson under the gaze of so many eyes! Old men, shedding tears of joy, load him with praises; the youth of Israel regard him with a generous admiration; while a fair crowd of blooming maidens, with harp in hand and flowery garlands on their heads, sing, as they dance before him, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." The curtain falls on that scene, and rises on another. An aged man is hurrying across the stage; time has silvered his noble head; tears filled his eyes and rolled down his cheeks; an exile from Jerusalem, he is followed only by a small band, who go to share the misfortunes of their discrowned and dishonoured master. It is David; the same man who, years before, had the popularity that stirred the envy of a king. Why do they drive him from his throne, and home, and capital? What evil has he done? Evil! He has done none—nothing to forfeit the favour of the giddy multitude, or blot out the memory of the glorious day when, meeting his giant foe in single combat, he slew the Philistine and saved the State. He is the same man; but they are not the same people. Well was it for David on that dark, disastrous day, that he had never made fame his idol, or the public favour his ruling passion; and that he had steered his course, not by the shifting lights of earth, but by the pole-star of God's

holy word! Well was it that no bearded prophet came out on this fugitive king, to stand in his path, and point to a people who had flung him off, and flung him out, saying, "Thy calf hath cast thee off!"

I have known a patriot who had done good service to the State, hissed by the populace who once cheered him to the echo. I have seen a preacher, once followed by crowds that hung upon his lips, stand up amid cold and empty benches; and, when his locks were grey, and his hands were palsied, address himself to a few scattered hearers. Well was it for these men that they sought the people's profit—not their praise! Well, when the laurels man had bound around their brows were dropping into dust and decay, that their eyes had been raised to a crown immortal in the heavens! Well that an ungodly world could not reproach them, asking, Where is now thy God? Well, above all, that God himself, pointing to the deserted house, or hissing crowd, did not say, Thy calf hath cast thee off! Calm, and not much moved by the vicissitudes of a changing world, is the soul that finds its centre and its rest in God.

3. The sentiment of my text is illustrated also by the case of those who seek their happiness in the pleasures of sin.

Look at yonder wretched, more than wretched—guilty drunkard; though, to the shame of a country and government that surrounds him with temptations, the poor wretch is sometimes as much sinned against as sinning. With beggary hung on his back, palsy shaking his hand, and in his downcast head and avert-

ed looks a sense of shame and degradation—how unlike what once he was! Where is now the jovial song? where the clever jest? where the bright and ready wit that, flashing over the festive scene, was followed by thunders of applause? Gone! Despised and shunned, like poor Robert Burns, by those who, for the sake of his fascinating accomplishments, once courted his society—driven from his drunken haunts by the greedy traffickers who have been building up their accursed fortunes out of the wreck of his body, soul, peace, character, home, all that is dear and precious upon earth—his calf hath cast him off. Or look at yon fallen woman drinking the dregs of her bitter, damning cup! Flattered, seduced, betrayed, and now cast away as a loathsome thing by the villain-hand that plucked the flower—"plucked the rose and left the thorn"—see her refused even a place to die in, and thrust forth lest her moans should disturb hellish orgies! How do these groans of a body racked with pain, of a soul tortured with dreadful memories, and already suffering the torments of hell, sound like the echo of the words, "Thy calf hath cast thee off!" I never stood in a cold, lonely, unfurnished garret, where some such wretch, like a dying dog, had dragged herself quietly to die; I never saw the bloated, degraded, ragged drunkard, driven from the door where he had wasted wages that should have gone to bless wife, and children, and make a happy home, but the voice of God seemed to sound out these words, "Thy calf hath cast thee off." Such cases teach us—may the Holy Spirit impress and bless the lesson—that "the tender mercies

of the wicked are cruel" and that "the way of the transgressors is hard!"

Turn from these scenes, and let me introduce you to a chamber where we have been summoned to the bedside of one that lies a-dying, after having run a course of vice—early, fiercely, madly run it. This young man has gone down the dance of pleasure; and danced it out. The lights quenched; the music ceased; the actors gone; he is left alone upon the stage. Now, another fire than that of guilty passions is burning in his veins. His heart is beating a quick march to the grave. Laughed at so long as he appeared in the distance, Death with grim and ghastly aspect is now standing by his side. He had, very probably to quiet an uneasy conscience, imbibed infidel opinions; and his infidelity, a rotten plank, bends under the weight of the hour—is breaking beneath his feet! To my dying day I never can forget either how eagerly he flung out his arms to catch a hold of Christ, or the cries of that ghastly man as he was swept off into eternity. Lost or saved, I cannot tell; but the silence of the skeptic's chamber seemed to be broken by a voice that said, "Thy calf hath cast thee off."

I have shown how riches will cast you off, and how the world will cast you off, and how pleasure will one day fling you from her polluted arms over into the pit. Let me now speak for Christ, and tell you of him who will not—will never cast you off. Would God that I might prevail on one, and another, and another, to come, and, casting themselves this hour into his arms, close with his offered mercy. A great statesman.

abandoned in his old age by his sovereign, lay dying one day in England; and it is recorded of him that he said, If I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king, he had not cast me off now. How true! Blessed God! thou wilt never abandon any who put their trust in thee—"They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, that cannot be moved." I have seen a master cast off an old, faithful servant. When his hair was grey, and his back was bent, and his arm was weak, and his once stalwart frame was worn out in service, he has been thrown on the parish, or on the cold charity of the world. Blessed Jesus! thou never didst cast off old servant, or old soldier of thine! Masters? Not masters only, but even a mother may cast off! She can "forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb." But Jesus! this true loving mother, who fondles her infant, presses him to her bosom, teaches the laughing boy to walk, kisses away his tears, hastes to raise him when he falls, sings him to sleep, watches by his cradle-couch, is ready to dash into the burning house, or leap into the boiling flood, to save him, is but thy dim, imperfect image! How justly may we crown thy brows with the chaplet David wove to the memory of Jonathan, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women!"

Let sinners, then, come to Jesus. Come now! He will never cast you off—no, though you were the greatest sinner that ever sinned on earth, he will heal your backslidings, and love you freely. Be it that you are grown grey in sin, that there is falsehood, robbery, se-

duction, even blood, on your hand, that there is no crime man can commit that you have not done, it matters not. Lay your sins on Jesus! You shall be forgiven; and your welcome will be that of the returning prodigal who, ere he had time to cry, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight," was folded in the old man's arms, and felt the tears from a father's eyes dropping on his haggard cheek. To every penitent who weeps on his bosom, Jesus says, I will never leave thee. Yes. Your mother may leave you, so may the wife of your bosom, so may wealth and health and earthly friends; these all, the whole world, may leave you, but "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Leave us! He is never so near as when all others leave us. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Let dying chambers witness how true to such promises is the believer's God. Look here—a Christian is dying; striking the last blows of a long, hard-fought battle, the sword is about to drop from his hand—the crown is descending on his head. Stand aside and give him air! Lay your hand on his heart; it is fluttering like a dying bird! Hush! he speaks; bend over him and lay your ear close to his lips. The voice is weak and tremulous, but in that dread hour how strong the faith that whispers, with life's fading breath, "My heart and my flesh faint and fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for evermore!"

One Thing Needful.

"One thing thou lackest."—Mark x. 21.

It is not raw recruits, beardless boys, that are thrown into the fiery breach, or placed in the front of battle. On the contrary, where the bullets fly the thickest, and the carnage rages fiercest, the ground is held by veterans—men that, inured to war, and familiar with the sight of blood, the flash of steel, and the roar of cannon, wear stern determination on their faces, and scars and medals on their breasts. The post of danger is assigned to veterans. Heavy burdens are for the back, not of boys, but men. This is common sense; and to deal otherwise were to deal unwisely and unfairly. It were little else than murder to bid a boy who had just left his mother's side, nor set foot before on a deck, climb the shrouds to reef the top-sails in a storm, when masts bent to the breaking, and the ship was reeling down into the trough of the sea. What man who loved his son, and possessed sense and consideration, would put inexperienced youth to so severe a trial?

Why, then, since Jesus really loved the young ruler, did he try him in a way that would have put the faith of the oldest Christian to the strain? Samson's hair is left

time to grow ; nor is it till his shoulders are covered with flowing locks that he has to confront the shaggy lion. He is grown to manhood before he is called to the work, not of one, but of a thousand men. But here Christ calls one young in years, and younger still in his regard to himself, to undertake a gigantic task ; and when the boy who, so to speak, has never seen the flash of steel before, is ordered to the front—into the very thick of the fight, and shrinks back, I confess that at first sight I wonder less at that, than that Jesus should have exposed a stripling to so sore a trial. Let the best and oldest Christian imagine himself in this young man's circumstances ! Suppose his case to be yours ! Think how you would feel were you suddenly called on to give away all the earnings of a life-time, or to part with an ancestral estate—the old house, the old trees, the lands that had been in your family for many generations—or to leave a pleasant home, the scenes of your boyhood, the society of dear friends, reputation, wealth, rank, to descend at a step into the condition of a beggar ; and follow the fortunes of a man himself so poor, that he had not a place where to lay his head. Would not that make the boldest of us hesitate ; the strongest stagger ? It was a dreadful trial. How many of us could stand it, God only knows ! But if any look more with scorn than sympathy on this faltering youth, I do not ; and such as feel quite confident that they would have acted a nobler part would do well to remember the warning. "Let not him that putteth on his armor boast as he that putteth it off."

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest—Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy; and my burden, for it is light," said our blessed Lord. Most gracious words! And what object could this loving Saviour have in laying what appeared so heavy a burden on the back of this youth? It was his real good. It was not to break the back of the man, but of his pride. It was not to repel, but to attract him; not to quench the smoking flax, but to blow it into a flame. By the use of a test whereby he might be convinced that he was not what he seemed to others, nor even to himself, our Lord sought to bring him to a true knowledge of himself; and that, in fact, so far as genuine faith and piety were concerned, these words were true of him, "One thing thou lackest."

I. How important one thing may be.

The want of one thing may make void the presence of all things else. Lacking its mainspring—which is but one thing—a watch with jewels, wheels, pinions, and beautiful mechanism, the finest watch indeed that was ever made, is of no more use than a stone. A sundial without its gnomen, as it is called, time's iron finger that throws its shadow on the circling hours—but one thing also—is as useless in broad day as in the blackest night. A ship may be built of the strongest oak, with masts of the stoutest pine, and manned by the best officers and crew, but I sail not in her if she lacks one thing—that trembling needle which a child running about the deck might fancy a toy; on that plaything, as it looks, the safety of all on board de-

pends—lacking that, but one thing, the ship shall be their coffin, and the deep sea their grave. It is thus with true piety, with living faith. That one thing wanting, the greatest works, the costliest sacrifices, and the purest life, are of no value in the sight of God—are null and void.

Still further, to impress you with the valuelessness of every thing without true piety, and show how its presence imparts such worth to a believer's life and labours, as to make his mites weigh more than other men's millions, and his cup of cold water more precious than their cups of gold—let me borrow an illustration from arithmetic. Write down a line of cyphers! You may add thousands, multiplying them till the sheets they fill cover the face of earth and heaven, they express nothing: and are worth nothing. Now take the lowest number of the ten, the smallest digit; and place that at their head—magic never wrought such a change! What before amounted to nothing rises instantly by the addition of one figure, one stroke of the pen, into thousands, or millions, as the case may be; and whether they represent pounds or pearls, how great is the sum of them! Such power resides in true faith—in genuine piety.

It may be the lowest piety—but one degree above zero; it may be the love of smoking flax; the hope of a bruised reed; the faith of a mustard seed; the hesitating, faltering confidence of him who cried, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Still, so soon as it is inwrought by the Spirit of God, it changes the whole aspect of a man's life and the whole prospect of

his eternity. It is that one important thing, wanting which, however amiable, moral, and even apparently religious we may be, our Lord addresses us, as he did the young ruler, saying, "One thing thou lackest." Sad to say, the one thing lacking is the one thing needful.

This interesting and alarming case suggests two or three cautions, which we would do well to ponder and attend to. Our heart being by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, we are prone to say, Peace, peace, when there is no peace to be found; and I pray you, therefore, to observe—

II. That we may be amiable without being religious.

It is sad to find grace associated in some Christian people with an unkindly, uncharitable, sour, severe, stern, or sullen temper. It should not be so. It presents a most unhappy and incongruous conjunction—one that, to borrow the wise man's figure, is "like a jewel in a swine's snout." If the world's enmity to God and his image is such that a Christian is not a man loved, be it so; but let him be lovely and loving—let him be like Christ! What a lovely example his! Into whose eye did Jesus ever bring a tear; in whose pillow one thorn? The very look he bore bred hope in the bosom of despair, and invited the guiltiest to his feet. The voice that ruled the wild elements of nature was low and sweet to win the confidence of childhood; and he who was more than a man among men became a child to children. Ready to serve all, he had tears for them that wept, and ears for them

that begged ; a helping hand for such as needed, and forgiveness for such as sinned ; peace for a weeping Magdalene ; prayers for murderers ; paradise for a dying thief ; and for all that suffered such ready sympathy, that on his visit to Bethany, after Lazarus' death, Martha, never doubting it, passionately exclaimed, " If thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Well did a woman, as she hung on his lips, drink in his words ; and looking up into a face where human mildness was blended with divine majesty, raise her hands to exclaim, " Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked."

His life is a picture not to admire only, but to copy ; a pattern to imitate by constant attention to such counsels as these : Be courteous ; be merciful ; forgiving and forbearing with one another ; be kindly affectionate toward one another in brotherly love ; condescend to those that are of low estate ; let not the sun go down upon your wrath ; let no wrath, or malice, or evil speaking, proceed out of your mouth ; love one another, as I have loved you ; love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. Alas ! that Christians should, as they often do, mar the appearance and impair the influence of their piety by neglecting these beautiful rules ! They shine ; but like a lamp where the flame gleams dimly through foul and smoky glass. John Baptist was not only a burning but a *shining* light ; and we should never forget the emphatic word of this saying—" Let your light *so* shine "—shine so bright, with such a smokeless flame, through a life of such transparent purity —" that

others seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Though to be lamented, it is not to be denied, that grace has a hard struggle in some with a naturally harsh, imperious, uncharitable temper. If I sought among good men, not a resemblance, but in one aspect a contrast, to our Lord himself, I find in Jonah, as he stands here in Scripture, rather a beacon to warn men off, than a light to guide them on. Though a great sinner, and one who had experienced much mercy and a most remarkable deliverance from death at the hand of God, see how that stern and gloomy man can calmly contemplate the destruction of Nineveh, with its six score thousand children who knew not their right hand from their left! The city is spared; and now, lest his reputation should sustain some injury, and he, forsooth, be accounted a false prophet, he frets and fumes! What is man? What a pitiable exhibition this, of pride and selfishness! It has led some to doubt whether, with such an ungenial and ungracious temper, he did not belong to the Balaam order of prophets—whether he was really a true man of God. We feel no such doubt. Still his case proves how much the grace of God has sometimes to contend with; how much it has to overcome; and how true the saying, Grace will live where neither you nor I could. Grace living in Jonah's heart appears a greater wonder than Jonah living in the whale's belly; and his final deliverance from a temper so proud and rugged was, at least, as great a miracle as when the monster, cleaving its way through the deep, struck the shore

and vomited him out safe on the dry land. No true Christian shall die, and therefore no true Christian should be content to live with such dispositions, and in such a state ; for though fruit when first formed be green and sour, it always sweetens as it ripens, and mellows to its fall. All whom God justifies, he will certainly, sooner or later sanctify.

While saving grace, as is shewn by the case of Jonah, may be found where there is a sad want of natural graces, as they are called, on the other hand, these have adorned many who were entire strangers to the grace of God. Beware of confounding them : mistaking the one for the other ; or imagining that natural graces ever can compensate for the grace that is to salvation. We may be possessed of much that is beautiful, without anything holy—presenting features of character more or less analogous to those of nature. The moor with bushes of golden gorse, the hills robed in purple, the woodlands where bright sunbeams play on a carpet of many-colored sorrel, hyacinths, and anemones, the banks by the waterside fragrant with thyme, or studded with modest primroses—these uncultivated wilds have beautiful flowers ; and in affectionate parents, sweet children, gentle sisters, loving brothers, kind acquaintances, and when a man's back is at the wall, friends true as steel, our unsanctified nature presents beautiful specimens of humanity. What an example of this, the man before us! Yet turning his back on Christ, and going away sorrowful because he had great possessions, how does he warn us that the sweetest, kindest, gentlest, may want the one thing

needful! However lovely and loved you may be, and indeed deserve to be, except you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.

III. There may be much moral correctness without true religion.

To us there seems a wide difference between the judge, with the robes of office on his back, mind in his eye, and dignity in his mien, and that poor, pale, haggard wretch at the bar, who throws stealthy glances around, and hangs his head with shame. Yet the difference that looks so great to man may be very small in the eyes of God; and would look small in ours if we knew the different upbringings and history of both. The judge never knew what it was to want a meal; the felon often went cold and hungry to bed. The one, sprung of wise, kind, reputable, and perhaps pious parents, was early trained to good, and launched, with all the advantages of school and college, on an honourable and high career; while the other, bred up a stranger to the amenities of cultivated and Christian society, had no such advantages. Born to misery, his struggles with misfortune and evil began at the cradle. None ever took him by the hand to lead him to church or school. A child of poverty, and the offspring of abandoned parents, he was taught no lesson but how to swear, and lie, and drink, and cheat, and steal. The fact is, it is just as difficult for some to be honest as it is easy for others. What merit has that judge in his honesty? None. He had no temptation to be else than honest. And so, I suspect, much of the morality

—of that unblemished character and decent life in which many trust, saying to some poor guilty thing, "Stand aside, I am holier than thou," and pluming themselves on this, that they have not sinned as others have done—is due, less to their superior virtue, than to their more favourable circumstances. Have they not sinned as others have done? I reply, They have not been tempted as others have been. And so the difference between many honest men and decent women on the one hand, and those on the other hand on whom a brand of infamy has been burned and the key of a prison turned, may be just the difference between the green branch on the tree and the white ashes on the hearth. This is bathed in the dews of night and fanned by the breath of heaven, while that, once as green, has been thrust into the burning fire—the one has been tried in a way that the other has not. No doubt God's grace can preserve man in temptation as his presence did the bush that was wrapped in flames and burned unconsumed. Not otherwise, however, can any be preserved. Therefore it becomes us to be clothed with humility; ever praying, Lead us not into temptation. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Taking into account the fortunate and favourable circumstances in which some are reared, we can thus explain this youth's reply to our Lord's repetition of the commandments, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." A child of fortune, the heir of affluence, reared perhaps with pious care, with a noble property to supply his wants, an honourable station to sus-

tain, and kind parents to win his affections, it is easy to account for his observance of the law—such as it was. It did not require an element of divine love in his heart, or of true piety in his character. His purse filled with money, what temptation had he to steal? Blessed with an amiable temper, he had none of those quick and fiery passions which explode into acts of violence, and hurry others into unpremeditated crime, having the honour of a holy office to sustain, no wonder that he was not addicted to the grosser sins! Possessing kind affections, and blessed with indulgent parents, no wonder that he honours them if living, and if dead, cherishes their memory and adorns their tomb.

This man did not know the spiritual nature of God's law, and how is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and how there may be adultery in a look, theft in a desire, and murder in an angry passion. Otherwise he had not replied, "Master, all these things have I observed from my youth;" but cried, Alas! alas! my Master, all these things have I broken from my youth—save me, I perish! And since, with affections so amiable, and a life as fair as ever won the esteem of mankind, he yet lacked the one thing needful; since he had nothing of godliness but a form—of religion but an empty shell; since the eye of Jesus, under his fair exterior, detected a selfish and unregenerate heart, what need have we to try ourselves? Your temper may be sweeter than Jonah's, still you may lack the one thing needful; your life may be purer than David's, still you may lack the one thing needful; you may be more honest than one to whom a dying Saviour

opened the gates of Paradise, and a pattern of filial obedience, you may be able to say with the elder brother of the prodigal, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment," still you may lack the one thing needful. This goodly exterior may be but the garish paint and odorous wrappings of a mummy case; within, is only dust and death. Let a man, then, examine himself. You may have still to be saved. Look within. Is the heart right with God? Unless it is right, all is wrong. Nor only try yourselves, but ask the Searcher of hearts to try you, crying, "O Lord, search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

IV. We may feel some interest and even anxiety about good things without true religion.

In this case, the path, as we advance, grows gloomier; the subject more solemn; the gate seems to straiten, and the road becomes narrower that leads to eternal life. How much is there here to alarm the careless, and to warn us all! Here is a man so amiable that he won our Lord's affections—"Jesus loved him," yet without saving grace; here is a man of the highest *morale*, yet without saving grace; here is a man repairing to the very fountain-head of life, seeking it in Christ, yet a stranger to the grace of God—lost, forever lost, so far as we know or read in Scripture. The curtain drops on him, with his face turned to the world, and his back to heaven.

I look on this as one of the most alarming cases in

the sacred record. How loudly it calls professing Christians to try the foundations on which their hopes are resting! Are there not many who in their life, their manners, their disposition and deportment, come far short of one who himself came short of eternal life? and if he missed the prize, what feasible, possible ground have they to hope for it? He had something, but they have nothing in them for Jesus to love; nor can they in any sense whatever say, "Master, all these things have I observed from my youth." If a man outwardly so good did not get to heaven, then how are they to get there? "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If the righteous, not like this man the nominally, but the really righteous, those who have been washed in the blood of the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, are scarcely saved, where shall the wicked and the ungodly appear? "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

This ruler gave more apparent evidence of saving grace perhaps than you do—than many certainly do who repair to the Lord's table and bear an excellent character in the church. Look at his earnestness! He did not postpone to some more convenient period the concerns of his soul; on the contrary, these engrossed his attention, and eagerly bent on this great object, like a man thoroughly in earnest, engaged in an affair that brooked no delay, "he came running to Christ." Look at his humility! A noble by birth, a ruler by office, a

man of high position and immense wealth, see him kneeling at the feet of one who drew his first breath in a stable, and wandered the world so poor that he had not a place, other than the cold ground, where to lay his head. Look at this respect and reverence! Others called Jesus a glutton and wine-bibber, the associate of publicans and friend of sinners; not so this man. He may call others Rabbi, but the carpenter's son and maligned of Pharisees, he esteems and honors above all—Jesus is not Master merely, but good Master; "Good Master," he says, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Then look at the object he sought to grasp! Though possessed of everything this world could afford, or its worshippers desire—a happy temper, the affection of friends, a noble reputation, possessions greater than his wants, he felt a void within that the world could not fill. Aspiring after honors which God only can give, and seeking a house eternal in the heavens, he looks beyond this world; and more than that, as if he knew the avenger was at his heels, and heard his step and breathing close behind, see with what speed he runs to the City of refuge! Yonder is Christ. He makes right for the crowd; dashes into it; elbows his way through; and throwing himself at Jesus' feet, cries, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? No wonder that the disciples, when they saw such a man turn his back on Christ, and heard our Lord pronounce it easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, were astonished out of measure; and said, Who then can be saved? If

this good ship does not make the harbor, what hope for others?

"Who then can be saved?" We are prepared to answer the question. All, the greatest sinners, may be saved that seek what this young ruler lacked. If a man, clinging to this wreck, will stay in it, he shall perish —sink with the sinking ship. But accept the offer Christ makes of peace by the blood of his cross, and you are saved; saved in spite of your riches, as well as of your sins. This man went away sorrowful. But you may go away joyful; not gloomy but glad; rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of your salvation. Mercy to pardon all your sins, and blood to cleanse your guilty souls, faith to believe in Christ and grace to follow him, are at your acceptance. God makes a free offer of them now. Close with it! Cast yourselves at the Saviour's feet, and you shall rise to say, Jesus! lead on! I follow. Farewell father and mother; farewell brother and sister; farewell lover and friend; farewell riches and reputation; farewell ease and indulgence. I accept this cross. Lead on, Lord! where thou goest I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God.

The Review.

"I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do."—Eccles. ii. 11.

Our Lord pronounced the children of this world "wise in their generation;" and who can doubt that thousands who are lost would, with God's blessing, be saved, did they bring the same prudence, and diligence, and energy to their eternal, as they do to their temporal interests? But in how many people is consummate wisdom joined to the greatest folly! They are wise enough to gain the world, but fools enough to lose their souls.

Convince a man that the only way to save his life is to part with his limb, and he does not hesitate an instant between living with one limb and being buried with two. Borne in the operating theatre, pale, yet resolute, he bares the diseased member to the knife. And how well does that bleeding, fainting, groaning sufferer teach us to part with our sins rather than with our Saviour. If life is better than a limb, how much better is heaven than a sin!

Two years ago a man was called to decide between preserving his life, and parting with the gains of his lifetime. A gold-digger, he stood on the deck of a

ship that, coming from Australian shores, had—as some all but reach heaven—all but reached her harbour in safety. The exiles had been coasting along their native shores: and to-morrow, husbands would embrace their wives, children their parents, and not a few realize the bright dream of returning to pass the evening of their days in happiness amid the loved scenes of their youth. But as the proverb runs, there is much between the cup and the lip. Night came lowering down; and with the night a storm that wrecked ship, and hopes, and fortunes, all together. The dawning light but revealed a scene of horror—death staring them in the face. The sea, lashed into fury, ran mountains high; no boat could live in her. One chance still remained. Pale women, weeping children, feeble and timid men, must die; but a stout, brave swimmer, with trust in God, and disencumbered of all impediments, might reach the shore, where hundreds stood ready to dash into the boiling surf, and, seizing, save him. One man was observed to go below. He bound around his waist a heavy belt, filled with gold, the hard gains of his life; and returned to the deck. One after another, he saw his fellow-passengers leap overboard. After a brief but terrible struggle, head after head went down—sunk by the gold they had fought hard to gain, and were loth to lose. Slowly he was seen to unbuckle his belt. His hopes had been bound up in it. It was to buy him land, and ease, and respect—the reward of long years of hard and weary exile. What hardships he had endured for it! The sweat of his brow, the hopes of

day and the dreams of night, were there. If he parts with it, he is a beggar; and then if he keeps it, he dies. He poised it in his hand; balanced it for a awhile; took a long, sad look at it; and then with one strong, desperate effort, flung it far out into the roaring sea. Wise man! It sinks with a sullen plunge; and now he follows it—not to sink, but, disencumbered of its weight, to swim; to beat the billows manfully; and, riding on the foaming surge, to reach the shore. Well done, brave gold-digger! Ay, well done, and well chosen; but if "a man," as the Devil said, who for once spoke God's truth, "will give all that he hath for his life," how much more should he give all he hath for his soul? Better to part with gold than with God; to bear the heaviest cross than miss a heavenly crown.

Such lessons the children of this world teach the children of "the kingdom;" and among others, and not the least important lesson, is the duty of self-examination. Was there ever a successful merchant who did not balance his books year by year? I have noticed, in reading the details of a court of bankruptcy, that fortunes are as surely wrecked by indolence or carelessness, as by wild speculations, or boundless extravagance. Here is a trader, bankrupt. Sober, honest, industrious, anxious to pay every one their own, not living in splendour at other men's expense, he should have thriven. Yet this honest man has to take a place beside rogues—he, and others, throwing all the blame on fortune; imputing his misfortunes to the blind goddess, her capricious temper and unsteady

wheel. But the examination comes, like that day of a greater judgment which shall reveal the true, and unsuspected causes that have wrought the ruin of many souls. The debtor's books are produced ; and now it appears that last year, and the year before, and for many years, there has been no balance struck. Fancying that all was right, too careless to think of it, too busy to spare time for taking stock, or too indolent to go through its irksome labour, from year to year he has put off striking a balance, till now he strikes on the rock ahead. The crash comes. He opens his eyes on ruin ; and finds, too late, that for years he has been driving a losing trade. He is a bankrupt for want of a balance. And the general practice of men of business, their custom of year by year taking stock, examining their books and striking a balance to know how they stand, is a lesson of the highest value. Our everlasting salvation may turn on it. People go on dreaming that all is right when all is wrong ; nor wake to the dreadful truth till they open their eyes in torment. What pains ought we to take to avoid the remotest chance of such a calamity ! If men take such care of their earthly fortunes, how much greater our need to see how we stand with God ; and do with our spiritual what all wise merchants do with their earthly interests—review the transactions of every year ! Let us judge ourselves that we be not judged ; and, holding a court of conscience, in the words of the text, " Look on all the things that my hands have wrought, and on the labours that I have laboured to do."

I. In this review we should inquire what we have done for God.

What has God done for us? In the dew drops that top every spike of grass, sow the sward with orient pearl, and hang like pendent diamonds, sparkling in the sun from all the leaves of the forest, you see the multitude of his mercies. He crowns the year with his bounty. We have seen other streams dried up by the heat of summer, and frozen by the cold of winter —that of his mercies never. It has flowed on; day by day, night by night, ever flowing; and largely fed of heavenly showers, sometimes overflowing all its banks. To this, and that other one has the past brought afflictions? Still, may I not ask, how few our miseries to the number of our mercies; how far have our blessings exceeded our afflictions; our nights of sleep, those of wakefulness; our hours of health, those of sickness; our many gains, the few losses we have suffered? For every blow, how many blessings! and even when he smote with one hand, did not a gracious God hold up with the other? Who has not to sing of mercy as well as judgment; ay, much more of mercies than of judgments? Let us not write the memory of these on water, and of those on the rock. Then, can we deny, should we not rather be ready to acknowledge, that however sorely tried, we have been afflicted far less than our iniquities deserved? Let that silence each murmuring thought, and teach us to be dumb—opening not the mouth. Dumb! No. Let the dumb sing! "Count it all joy," says the apostle, "when ye fall into divers temptations." Faith sees crowns grow-

ing on the top of crosses, and plucks roses from the thorny bush. She holds in her hand that which not only turns water into wine—common into new covenant mercies, but Jericho's saltness and Marah's bitterness into sweetest streams. What a healing branch, plucked from the tree of life, this truth, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" or this, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?"

That is one side of the account-current; now look at the other! In the years that are past, what have we done for God? We have had many, daily, innumerable, opportunities of serving him, speaking for him, working for him, not sparing ourselves for him who spared not his own Son for us. Yet, how little have we attempted; and how much less have we done in the spirit of our Saviour's words, Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? In the golden sheaves of harvests the soil, grateful for favours, returns to the husbandman all that it gets; and by the mouths of its ten thousand rivers the earth gives back her treasures to the sea—and hence the sea is always full. But how poor the return we have made to God! There is no moor in our country so barren as our hearts. They drink up God's blessings as the sands of the Sahara heaven's rain. Nor is it but here and there that our life shews any green spots with verdure to refresh the eye, and call for the grateful acknowledgment of the apostle, "By grace I am what I am,"

—by the grace of God I have done what I have done! Alas, how few are the days, how few the deeds of the past, that will be remembered with any comfort on a death-bed! It is impossible even now to review our lives without feeling that there is no hope for us out of Christ; and that the best and the busiest have been unprofitable servants. And if such be the case with those who are not dead to the claims of God, but say, I love the Lord—Bless the Lord, O my soul—I have wished, and I have tried to serve him—what must be the case with others? What looms up in the future of those who have lived without God in the world? If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear?

II. In this review we should inquire what we have done for ourselves.

From the summit of his hanging gardens, Nebuchadnezzar swept his eye over the mighty city that lay with its hundred gates of brass, the vast circuit of its walls, its noble river, and lordly palaces, and busy streets, spread out at his feet. His pride kindles at the sight. Is not this, he exclaims, great Babylon that I have built! But where is Babylon now? In anti-christian Rome there is a mystic Babylon, against which God seems to be mustering his armies, so that ere long the world, shaken by her fall, may hear the long expected cry, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." But the other has perished ages ago in the wreck of time, and left hardly a wreck behind. "Babylon shall become heaps;" and heaps she is.

By the silent river that sweeps through a lonely desert, the long clay mounds mark her grave; and remain to give echo to the words, Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!

And if "the harvest is past, and the summer ended, and we are not saved," what other verdict than "Vanity" can conscience and truth pronounce on the years that are gone? We have stopped half-way in Solomon's sentence for a text; but we must read it out, on to the close, for the full-length portrait of one who has lived in pleasure, neglecting the great salvation: "I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

No profit? Do you reply, I have made large profits —my business has paid me, and yielded large returns —I have added acres to my lands—I have added hundreds to my wealth, or many fresh, green leaves to my laurel-crown? But, let me say that that, perhaps, is not all you have added. What if by every day you have lived without God and for the world, you have added difficulties to your salvation; shackles to your limbs; bars to your prison; guilt to your soul; sins to your debt; thorns to your dying pillow? As Samuel Johnson said to Garrick, when the great actor, receiving the great moralist at his country-villa, showed him all its elegance and beauty,—"Ah, David!" said Johnson solemnly, as he laid a kind hand on the other's shoulder,—"these are the things that make a death-bed terrible." Profit! what profit had Jonah in his gourd,

when its dry leaves rustled over his burning head, and fell in showers on the floor of his once green bower.

There is a story of a man who, unable to recall one good thing said or done from morning to noon, and from noon to night, exclaimed, I have lost a day! But if the years now gone, with all their golden hours gone never to return, have been spent only on the world and the things of the world,—if "the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved," it is not a day, nor a year, but years that we have lost.

Not lost, however, these years by those who, born again, and made new creatures in Jesus Christ, have entered on a state of grace! A memorable night that when the ground shook beneath the tramp of millions, and Moses at her head, triumphant and jubilant Israel took her way out of the land of bondage! A memorable day that when, rising to the voice of Christ, Lazarus left the dusty tomb, its gloomy silence, and mouldering skeletons, for his sisters' arms and the lightsome home at Bethany! But more memorable still the year on which a soul passes from death to life, the date and day of a man's second birth.

> Happy day, happy day,
> When Jesus washed my sins away.

Other birth-days may be dashed in some measure with sorrow, and celebrated with chequered feelings. Where are some who used to convene on these occasions, and wish us years of happiness? We miss round the board familiar faces; this and that chair is

vacant; old friends are thinning off; and death, approaching ourselves, projects a cold shadow on the festive scene. And, ah, how many celebrate birthdays they shall wish had never been! The lights extinguished—the music silent—the dancers gone—the fair forms of beauty mouldering in the grave,—in another world they shall curse the day they were wont to celebrate with such joyous scenes, and games, and merry laughter. "Cursed be the day when I was born—oh, that my mother might have been my grave—wherefore came I forth from the womb," Jeremiah says, "that my days should be consumed with shame?"—but they shall say, that I should suffer this torment, be gnawed by a worm that never dieth, and burn in flames that are never quenched. From such an awful doom, good Lord deliver us!

Let no man be cast down; give way to despair! Years are lost; but the soul is not yet lost. There is still time to be saved. Haste, then, and away. Up to work, the night is falling; to pray, the door is shutting; to escape, the avenger is close behind you. Make for the City of Refuge! Believe in Christ! for whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but hath everlasting life.

III. In this review we should inquire what we have done for others.

Our Saviour's whole life, which, if written fully out, John says, would fill so many volumes that the world would not be able to contain them, is told in this one, brief sentence, "He went about doing good." In this

work he lived; for this end he died. This drew him down from the skies; "doing good" was "the joy set before him," for which he wore the thorny crown, and bore his heavy cross. And mark this, that none are his, but those that are baptized with this baptism; —not you, "unless the same mind is in you that was in Jesus Christ."

Suppose, then, that our blessed Lord, sitting down on Olivet to review the years of his busy life, had looked on all the works which his hands had wrought, —what a crowd, a long procession of miracles and mercies had passed before him! How many sinners warned! how many mourners comforted! how many friends and neighbours counselled! how many griefs healed! how many sufferers relieved! what busy days, what blessed hours! his presence carrying sunbeams into darkened homes! mercies springing up like flowers all along his path from the cradle to the grave! With what truth and beauty might he have applied to himself the words of the patriarch: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness of me; because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing with joy." True of Job, how much more true are these words of the life of Jesus! He came in the form of a servant; and lived, not to himself, it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will. In that, he hath set us an example that we should follow his steps. And such an example! I believe there were more good

works crowded into one, single day of Christ's life, than you will find spread over the life-long history of any Christian.

Trying our piety by this test, what testimony does our past life bear to his character? Ages ago, two strangers belonging to other spheres, alighted on our world; and both have left their footprints behind them. The poles are not so wide asunder as were their purposes. Rising on the smoke of the pit, Satan came from hell to ruin it: descending with a train of angels from the skies, Jesus came from heaven to save it. Each had his mission; and each performed it. We also have ours; and looking to the manner in which we have passed our lives, to which of the two do we bear the greatest resemblance? What have we been doing, what have we done in years gone by! Creeping like a serpent in some happy Eden, have we tempted others to their fall? or, Christlike, have we sought to raise the fallen? The tree is known by its fruits. Judge ye. The Lord have mercy on you if, tempting others to sin, you have played the devil's part! Happy those who, at however great a distance, and in however imperfect a manner, have attempted to follow Christ! "Well done, good and faithful servant," shall reward the pains, and crown the prayers, that sought to raise the fallen and save the lost.

In conclusion—

1. This review, God's Spirit blessing it, should awaken careless sinners.

If there was no remedy, if you were past redemp-

tion, I would no more seek to waken you than I would one who slept to-night, and was to be hanged to-morrow. Poor wretch, let him sleep on and take his rest —sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. A boat was once seen sweeping along the rapid that hurries to the Falls of Niagara. To the horror of some that watched it from the shore, they saw one aboard; and also asleep. Such a time and place for sleeping! They ran; they shouted; they cried. The sleeper woke; and at one wild, rapid glance took in all his danger. Yet what won't a man do for his life? To seize the oars and pull the boat's head round to the shore, was the work of an instant. With death in the thunders of the cataract, roaring loud and louder, near and nearer in his ear, how he pulled! But unless God had sent down the eagle that sailed in the blue skies overhead to bear him away upon her wings, there was no hope. The water, sweeping onward with resistless power, shot him like an arrow to the brink. It was cruel to waken him. But, as nigh to destruction, near hell as that, you may be saved; plucked from the very edge of ruin—just when you are going over. Jesus can save at the uttermost. He waits now to save; though how much longer he shall wait to hear from your lips the cry, "Save me," I know not. Beware! The patience of God is lasting, but not everlasting.

2. This review should stir up God's people.

You are not what you should be; you are not what you might have been. How much further on had we been in the way to Zion, if we had never slept! How much further advanced in grace, had we turned our

opportunities to the best account! See how great a difference one year makes on a thriving child!—alas! how little difference any one year, the last twelve months have made on us! No wonder! We have slept when we should have watched; rested, when we should have run; fled, when we should have fought; fallen, when we should have stood. The battle went against us because we did not go to it in the power of prayer, and in the strength of the Lord; and now precious opportunities of getting and of doing good are gone —never, never to return. There is a way, however, of redeeming lost time, as well as lost fortunes and estates. The woodman is taking it, who with sturdy arm and gleaming axe makes his blows fall thick and fast on the groaning tree; the rider, who spurs his foaming steed to its utmost mettle; the seaman who, flying from the pirate's guns, shakes out all his canvas, and under bending spars, plunges through the seething deep; the blacksmith who, by the glowing forge, and with the sweat standing on his swarthy brow, plies his hammer on the ringing anvil—doing in one hour the work of two. So may years be redeemed; the very past, after a fashion, recalled, and its shadow turned back on Time's old dial. Give your whole soul to this work; throw yourselves on your knees; crying to God for help, seek the aids of the Holy Spirit; and to whatever asks you to turn aside from making your calling and election sure, say, with Nehemiah, "I have a great work to do, therefore, I cannot come down."

No Delay.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."—Isa. lv. 6.

If Adam and Eve were somewhat ignorant, as we suppose them to have been, of God's omniscience, no wonder that they attempted to escape his notice. "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth." Nothing more natural for them than, as soon as they heard his step in the garden, to run, and make for the nearest and thickest bush. They had broken his law, and knew the consequences—"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." To have waited by the tree when they heard God, would have been to wait for death; to have left the bush where they lay concealed would have been to court it. To that guilty pair, as they crouched in fear and terror under the tree, the words of the text were the last we should have addressed; and the last they would have listened to. Their interest appeared to lie, not in seeking the Lord, but in fleeing from him; and such counsel as this would have appeared to come from that malignant devil who had planned, and now wished to complete, their ruin. No angel, ignorant of God's purpose, and looking with pity on our fallen parents, none but the fiend who gloried in the mischief he had wrought, would have

given them at that moment the advice that the Bible now gives us—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near."

Why so? why would it have seemed to be for Adam and Eve's interest to reject the counsel which it is so much for ours to take? Is there not the same law both to us and them—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" Is not God known to both as a God of justice to enact such a law, and of truth to execute it? Are not both the children and the parents conscious that as sinners, they stand equally exposed to its tremendous punishment? Why, then, is it not natural for us, instead of seeking the Lord, to flee his presence in dread of his avenging power? The difference between their circumstances and ours lies in this—that when they fled from God in Eden, their knowledge of him was circumscribed as compared with ours. Ignorant as yet of a mercy which was about for the first time to be revealed, they knew him only as a God of justice, of holiness, and of truth. But what makes it your plain as well as highest interest to seek the Lord, is that you know what they did not—that he is very pitiful and of great mercy; that he is not willing that any should perish; that he hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner; and that if he stands with the sword of justice glittering in one hand, in the other he holds out for your acceptance an ample pardon, and a blood-bought crown.

Had Adam and Eve known that he, whose voice they heard with such terror in the garden, had come not to slay but to save them; not to destroy them,

but their enemy; not to give them a grave, but hope in the promise of a Saviour, how had they hastened to fall at his feet, and cry, Father forgive us, we knew not what we did—flying as fast to God as they fled from God? Now, what they would have done had they known this, knowing it, we should certainly do. To seek him, were he merely a God of unbending justice, would be to rush on the bosses of the Almighty's buckler, and precipitate our ruin. But to all who seek him through a Redeemer, he is merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to wrath, abundant in goodness and in truth. Our highest interests, therefore, our present, and future, and eternal happiness, lie in yielding implicit and immediate obedience to the call, Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. How does the lapse of years, the close of every day, enforce this? The setting sun; the clouds that, like the infirmities of age, gather round his sinking head; the fading light; the workman wending homeward, the peasant leaving his plough in the furrow, the weaver his shuttle on the loom; the larks that have dropped out of silent skies; the birds sitting mute on the branches; the flowers with their eyes closed and leaves folded up; the tenants of lone cottages and crowded city retiring to rest; and by and bye the silence of a world wrapped in darkness and sleep—these are suggestive to a thoughtful mind of the close of life, the sleep of death, and our bed beneath a grassy sod. And each night that sun, whose lines go throughout all the earth, and his words to the ends of the world, with the heavens for his pulpit and the

world for his audience, seems as he leaves us to say, Work while it is called to-day, seeing that the night cometh when no man can work.

I. Consider what we are to understand by seeking the Lord.

The sense in which this is to be taken is explained by the succeeding verses—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." It is as a God, therefore, who will have mercy on the worst, and abundantly pardon the wickedest, that we are to seek the Lord—seeking him without a day's, or even an hour's, delay. To approach him in any other character, would be to throw ourselves on a naked sword—were in effect to offer the profane swearer's prayer, to pray that God would damn us.

We may, as man has often done, stand at a human bar conscious of our innocence. Strong in our integrity, and confident that the day of trial will prove us guiltless of the crimes laid to our charge, roll the cloud from our character, and cover our accusers with shame and confusion, we may refuse to put in a plea for mercy; boldly declaring that we want nothing more, and will accept of nothing less, than justice—

impartial justice. At God's tribunal, however, it is very different. There, simple justice were sure damnation. The Lord said to the Devil, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" yet, this perfect and upright man asks, "How should man be just with God? if he will contend with him, he cannot answer one in a thousand." The Psalmist was "a man after God's own heart," the most devout of men; yet he trembles at the thought of being dealt with on mere principles of justice. He deprecates it; he prays expressly and earnestly against it—saying, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

It is therefore, in his double aspect, combined but not contradictory character, as at once just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, as a God of justice to punish sin in the surety, and as a God of mercy to pardon it in the sinner, that we are to seek the Lord; and all the blessings which in that gracious character he has, and he promises, to bestow. Thus, to seek the Lord is just to approach him by faith; and in the pardon of sin and our sanctification, in a blood-bought title, and a Spirit-wrought meetness for the heavenly kingdom, to seek those benefits of redemption which Christ so dearly purchased, God so freely gives, and man so fully needs. "How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation?" Therefore, seek the Lord while he is to be found.

II. Inquire when these things are to be obtained, or, to use the words of my text, when the Lord is to be found?—and we remark,

1. That the Lord, as bestowing the pardon of sin and salvation of the soul, is to be found in this world, not in another.

Our spirits pass into the eternal world so soon as death dissolves the union that binds body and soul together. And what gives an awful solemnity to the last breath, the last quiver of the lips, that long shivering sigh which tells that all is over, is the thought that at that moment the condition of the dead is forever fixed. While the last groan is sounding in our ears, ere we have time to close the filmy eyes, to imprint a kiss on the marble brow, to move one step from the bedside, the soul has entered on a destiny of inexpressible happiness, or unutterable woe. The case of any, in whose fate we have felt a tender interest, but who died, alas, without leaving us any good ground for hope, nay, the awful, but certain fact, that many thus die, would make us, had we the shadow of a ground for it, believe, and cling to the belief, that hope survives this life; and that a man might be pardoned in another world who went unpardoned out of this. What God might have done had he so chosen, I dare not say. Whether he might have made one offer more of mercy to the disembodied spirit; whether, after revealing to its astonished gaze the glories of heaven and the misery of hell, letting it hear the praises of the saved and the groans of the lost, he might have made one last offer of a Saviour, I dare not conjecture. There are truths in

his word more or less clear to our eye, more or less comprehensible by our understanding; there are passages in the Holy Scriptures where a child may walk through, and others where a giant must swim. But if there is one doctrine more clearly revealed than another it is this—that God has made no such offer; and makes none. As the tree falleth so it lieth—the law of the other world this, He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Who doubts that they who pass out of this life rejecting Christ shall not have taken one step into another when they shall regret, bitterly regret, their folly? It shall be too late for regrets then. The cry has arisen; the lamps are lighted; the bridegroom has entered; the door is shut—and now they who would not open to Christ, nor receive him into their hearts, when he stood knocking at their doors, shall in vain knock at his, crying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. What a change! What a change to any at the moment of departure—from the seen to the unseen; from the society of men to that of angels; from the symbols of communion to the living presence of Christ; from the darkness of a dying scene to the light that is inaccessible, and full of glory; from the echo of our own groans, and the sounds of weeping, to the burst of ten times ten thousand voices, singing the songs of the redeemed. But greater changes than these to the impenitent and unbelieving, when the Father who gave up his Son to die for us, shall turn a deaf ear to their cries

for mercy; and the Son who dyed his cross red with the blood of love, and invited sinners to his arms, will bid them begone, saying, Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity. To seek the Lord, therefore, while he may be found, in other words, to seek pardon and reconciliation when they may be obtained, is to seek them in time. Here is a throne of grace, but yonder a throne of justice; here Christ is a saviour, but yonder he acts the part of a judge. That judge is at the door—therefore, whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

2. That the Lord, as bestowing the pardon of sin and salvation of the soul, is not to be found on a death-bed.

Yet that is the place, and the last hours of life the time, when many intend to seek him. They buoy themselves up with the hope of procuring the salvation then, which, till then, they have resolved to reject or at least to neglect. It is with dim and dying eyes they are to read their Bibles; it is with panting, faltering, dying voice they are to pray for mercy; it is when the hand of Death is thundering loud at the door, and he stands grim by their bedside, that they are to take the advice of my text and turn to the Lord. What folly! Is this your plan? And what is it in this scheme that makes you think it safe and good? It appears to me a desperate venture; so desperate, that I wonder that the Devil, with all his arts and power to deceive, can persuade any man to venture on

it who is endowed with reason, and possesses a glimmering of sense. "Surely in vain," says Solomon, "the net is spread in sight of any bird;" but here, not as there where the trap is temptingly baited and cunningly masked, the meshes of the net and the person of the fowler are patent to all eyes. Look at it!

First, Is this plan honouring to God, that we expect him, in the pardon of sin and salvation of our souls, to grant us at death what we have obstinately and persistently refused all our days? It is a plain mockery of God. It says, I will not turn to him till I can do no better—I will trample on his laws as long as I can do it safely—I will keep his Son standing at the door, till, weary, he turns to depart, and his last knock warns me that it is high time to open—I will give my health and vigour, the bloom of my youth, the mature powers of my manhood, the morning, the noon-day, even the evening of my life to the devil, the world, and the flesh—and the God that loved me, and the Saviour who pitied me and died for me, I will put off with the few, weak, worthless hours that precede the fall of the curtain; the close of life. How can a plan so insulting to God, and dishonouring to his Son, succeed? Be not deceived. God is not mocked. He refuses these vile dregs of life. "If ye offer," he says, "the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? If ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. A son honoureth his father and a servant his master; if, then, I be a father,

where is mine honour, If I be a master, where is my fear?"

Secondly, Is it because death is a suitable and convenient period for seeking the pardon of sin and salvation of the soul, that we propose to delay this matter till then? Suitable, convenient! Does death send us warning of his approach; giving due and timely notice that after so many weeks or days, we may look for a visit from the King of Terrors? Like other kings, is he always preceded by messengers to prepare the way, and make all things ready for his reception? No. The robber comes under the cloud of night; steals quietly into your house; treads the floor with muffled feet; and before you wake to seize his hand, has you by the throat, and plants a dagger in your heart. So death may come. "I come," says our Lord, "as a thief in the night—" "Behold I come quickly." Coming so, the procrastinating die without hope. And though death should make no such stealthy attack, nor leap on us with the suddenness of a tiger's spring, whoever looked on a dying scene to make resolutions such as these—I will delay seeking the Lord till my body is racked with these pains, my mind reeling in this wild delirium; not till I cannot lift my head from its pillow, not till I cannot read a line of the Bible, not till I can neither pray nor listen to the prayers of others, will I seek the Lord! I venture to say that wherever man made such a resolution, no man in his sober senses ever made it by a dying-bed. No. Death has enough to do with itself. It is a time not to seek, but to enioy the comforts of religion;

and if there is one impression which life's closing scene makes most strongly and deeply on the spectator, it is this, Now is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.

Thirdly, Is it because experience and the Bible encourages us to believe that the pardon of sin and salvation of the soul are most likely to be found at death, that we do not seek and call upon the Lord now? Who believes that there are many in heaven, and but few in hell, who deferred the duty of my text to dying hours? The reverse is the case. I have no doubt of that. Hell is paved with good intentions; and as there are few in the place of misery but intended before they left the world to seek the Lord, there are few in glory, who were called, justified, and sanctified, so late as the eleventh hour. The Bible records the names and history of many who are there now; and how many of them were saved on a death-bed? Many? a few of them? No. One single case of a call at the eleventh hour is all we find. One, as has been said, to teach none to despair, and but one to teach none to presume.

3. The Lord, as bestowing pardon and salvation, is more likely to be found now than at any future time. We can foretell neither what, nor where we shall be to-morrow. By to-morrow, the place that now knows us may know us no more forever. This may be our last Sabbath on earth; this the last occasion on which we shall ever all meet together till the resurrection; this the last time we may ever look on an earthly church; and ere these doors are again opened for

worship, for some of us a grave may have opened, and over us a grave may have closed. Sudden death either by accident or disease, the sun rising on a healthy form and setting on a breathless corpse, such events are ever warning us. And in the face of such warnings what folly it is to fold the hands, and compose ourselves anew to sleep, counting on this day being as yesterday, and to-morrow as to-day!

Suppose it were so; and that, like Hezekiah, we had other fifteen years added to our life, I still stand upon my ground; and maintain that we are more likely to find the Lord this day than during any other period of this new lease. Sin is like the descent of a hill, where every step we take increases the difficulty of our return. Sin is like a river in its course; the longer it runs, it wears a deeper channel, and the farther from the fountain, it swells in volume and acquires a greater strength. Sin is like a tree in its progress; the longer it grows, it spreads its roots the wider; grows taller; grows thicker; till the sapling which once an infant's arm could bend, raises its head aloft, defiant of the storm. Sin in its habits becomes stronger every day—the heart grows harder; the conscience grows duller; the distance between God and the soul grows greater; and, like a rock hurled from the mountain's top, the farther we descend, we go down, and down, and down, with greater and greater rapidity. How easy, for example, is it to touch the conscience of childhood; but how difficult to break in on the torpor of a hoary head! A child, with few sins on his young head, will tremble at the idea of death and judgment; while

the old man lies on his dying bed, and whether you thunder in his ears the terrors of a broken law, or, holding up the cross before his dim eyes, tell him of the love of Jesus, no tears run down these furrowed cheeks, nor prayers move lips, whose oaths are recorded in the books of judgment.

I know that God, bending stubborn knees, and breaking the hardest heart, can call at the eleventh hour. Is anything too hard for me? saith the Lord. He saves at the very uttermost. But I would say to him who tries how near he may go to hell, and yet be saved, It is a dangerous experiment—a desperate venture. It provokes God to recall his Spirit, and leave you to your fate, saying, He is joined to his idols, let him alone.

III. The shortness and uncertainty of life are strong reasons for seeking pardon and salvation now.

There is nothing so certain as death; and what more uncertain than life? How brief it is! Who stood sentinel by the gate of Shushan when the royal couriers, bearing hope to the Jews, dashed through, burying their spurs in their horses' flanks—who lately stood on the platform by the iron rails that stretch from Holyhead to London, when, signals flashed or along the line to stop the traffic and keep all clear, a engine and carriage dashed by with tidings of peac or war from America—saw an image of our life. The eagle poising herself a moment on the wing, and then rushing at her prey; the ship that, throwing the spray from her bows, scuds before the gale; the shuttle

flashing through the loom; the shadow of a cloud sweeping the hill-side, and then gone for ever, nor leaving a trace behind; the summer flowers that, vanishing, have left our gardens bare, and where were spread out the colours of the rainbow, only dull, black earth, or the rotting wrecks of beauty—these, with many other fleeting things, are emblems by which God through nature teaches us how frail we are; at the longest, how short our days. What need, therefore, there is to seize the passing moments—seeking the Lord while he is to be found.

We put this off by taking a wrong measure of our days. There are standard measures, imperial measures, as they are called, by which the business of our shops and markets, selling and buying, the transactions of commerce, are regulated. And if men would only be persuaded to regulate the business of their souls, the transactions between them, their conscience, and their God, by the royal standard and measure of human life, with what earnestness should we now seek the Lord! what crowds would throng the door of mercy—each one trembling lest it should be shut before he got in! But, alas, many take a false measure; and conclude that there is no hurry; no need of haste in seeking salvation. For example, My father, says one man, lived to such and such an age—my grandfather was an old man before he died—I am come of a long-lived race; and such persons, taking the age of their ancestors as the measure of their life, count on many years, and time enough left to seek a Saviour. Another says, I enjoy the best of health, my constitution is sound,

my frame is robust; no drunkard nor libertine, nor given to any excess, my habits are temperate; every thing about me is favourable to longevity. And so, as every child hopes to be a youth, and every youth a man, such men expect to reach old age; while old men grey-headed, bent under the weight of years, and tottering on the brink of the grave, count on growing older still. Why not? Don't they know people who have lived to greater years than theirs? Thus men play with the great work my text calls us to do—playing at a game where the devil will cheat them, and beat them. They stake their salvation on a cast of the dice.

May God persuade you to do otherwise! None else can. In vain the orator here plies his arts. The Devil laughs at oratory. He stands in more fear of a poor saint on his knees than of the greatest eloquence of the pulpit. Man may produce a temporary, surface impression, like the preaching friar who once resorted to a violent stroke of rhetoric. Addressing an audience in Italy at Lent time, with great power and pathos, on such topics as judgment and eternity, he drew a graphic picture of man's death—the dying struggles; the corpse; the funeral; the grave; its loathsome horrors; the vanity it pours on youth, and all the bravery and glory of this world. This done, amid the breathless silence of his congregation, he wound all up by fixing his eyes on a lovely woman before him—startling her, as, pulling from the folds of his gown a naked skull, he thrust it, grinning, in her face, and said, Such you shall be! The effect was electric. It drove the

colour from her rosy cheek, and sent a thrill of horror through the whole assembly—yet but a passing shock.

This was summoning Death to the pulpit. But I have no faith in his preaching. A daily preacher and a great preacher, none seems to have a more drowsy, inattentive, unreflecting audience. He can pluck a king from his throne in the midst of his guards ; but not a sinner from perishing. He severs the bond that binds husband and wife, the mother to her darling, my spirit to this flesh ; but not the feeblest tie that binds a soul to sin. How solemn, startling, are the sermons he preaches on my text, on the shortness of life, on the vanity of the world ; yet there is no blessing but with the Lord. With him is the residue of the Spirit—and without that, whether Death or dying man be the preacher, sermons are seed without the shower. Therefore with Moses, we address ourselves to God, praying, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom"—seeking the Lord while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near.

The Unchangeable Word.

"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."—Luke xvi. 17.

The "law" stands here, as in some other places of Scripture, for the whole revealed will of God. The heavens where, after the lapse of many thousand years, the stars are burning as bright as the day they were kindled; and the earth, whose hoar mountains have looked down unchanged on successive generations flowing on to the grave, as the river that washes their feet flows on to the sea, stand here the symbols of perpetuity. And thus, by declaring that heaven and earth shall sooner pass, these lofty hills be sooner levelled with the plain, these stars sooner drop, or that sun be be blotted from the sky, than God's word, or any part of it, fail of fulfilment—our Lord by the boldest figures and in the strongest manner asserts its perpetuity.

This law or will of God has been revealed to us in two ways—

First, by conscience, which works after the manner so beautifully set forth in the ring that a great magician, according to an eastern tale, presented to his prince. The gift was of inestimable value; not for the diamonds, and rubies, and pearls, that gemmed it,

but for a rare and mystic property in the metal. It sat easily enough on the finger in ordinary circumstances; but so soon as its wearer formed a bad thought, designed or committed a bad action, the ring became a monitor. Suddenly contracting, it pressed painfully on his finger, warning him of sin. Such a ring, thank God, is not the peculiar property of kings; all, the poorest of us, those that wear none other, possess and wear this inestimable jewel—for the ring of the fable is just that conscience, which is the voice of God within us; which is his law, engraven by the finger of God, not on Sinai's granite tables, but on the fleshy tablets of the heart; which, enthroned as a sovereign in every bosom, commends us when we do right, and condemns us when we do wrong. But this conscience, as an expression of the law or will and mind of God, is not now to be implicitly depended on. It is not infallible. What was true to its office in Eden, has been deranged and shattered by the Fall; and now lies, as I have seen a sun-dial in the neglected garden of an old, desolate ruin, thrown from its pedestal, prostrate on the ground, and covered by tall, rank weeds. So far from being since that fatal event an infallible directory of duty, conscience has often lent its sanction to the grossest errors, and prompted to the greatest crimes. Did not Saul of Tarsus, for instance, hale men and women to prison; compel them to blaspheme; and imbrue his hands in saintly blood, while conscience approved the deed—he judging the while that he did God service? What wild and profane imaginations has it accepted as the oracles of God! and, as if fiends had

'aken possession of a God-deserted shrine, have not the foulest crimes as well as the most shocking cruelties, been perpetrated in its name? Read the Book of Martyrs, read the sufferings of our own forefathers; and, under the cowl of a shaven monk, or the trappings of a haughty churchman, you shall see conscience persecuting the saints of God, and dragging even tender women and children to the bloody scaffold or the burning stake. With eyes swimming in tears, or flashing fire, we close the painful record, to apply to Conscience the words addressed to Liberty by the French heroine, when, passing its statue, she rose in the cart that bore her to the guillotine, and throwing up her arms, exclaimed, "O Liberty, what crimes have been done in thy name!" And what crimes in thine, O Conscience! deeds from which even humanity shrinks; against which religion lifts her loudest protest; and which furnish the best explanation of these awful words, "If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

So far as doctrines and duties are concerned, not conscience, but the revealed Word of God, is our one, only sure and safe directory. "Search the Scriptures," says our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." "To the law and to the testimony," says another, "if they speak not according to these, there is no truth in them." However honest people may be, with whatever halo piety has surrounded them, however burning the zeal that inspires them, though they walk the world in robes of light, speak with the tongues of angels, give their

goods to feed the poor, nay, giving their bodies to be burned, die martyrs for their principles, if they speak not according to these, there is no truth in them. Who does not admire honesty, and zeal, and self-denial? Still, men's willingness to suffer for their principles proves only their sincerity. It does not prove their soundness. The "law," therefore, on which my text pronounces this high eulogium, that form of the word of God which, amidst life's rudest tempests, and death's swelling waters, proves an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, is the Bible — that revealed Word which holy men of old spake, or wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Now let me—

I. Set forth some general observations on this word or law of God.

How many things could I say which should raise it in your esteem, and enhancing its value, win for it a larger share of your time—a closer and more prayerful study! Whitefield said that some made so little use of their Bibles, that you might write the word *damnation* on the dust that covered them. I do not suspect any of you of so entirely neglecting it, or treating it, as they did in the reign before Josiah's, when the only copy of the Bible in the whole land was swept with cobwebs into a corner among old lumber of the Temple. No. Thank God, more Bibles are in circulation now than copies of any other book. To illustrate this one, precious volume, more pens have been worn, more researches made, more books written, more days and nights spent, than on all other books besides. It might

well be so. It is the first of books; beyond all others the most venerable for its age, and the most valuable for its matter. Apart from its divine authority, there is more glowing eloquence, more noble sentiments, more melting pathos, more beautiful poetry, within its boards than anywhere else. From its pages moralists have borrowed their noblest maxims, and poets their finest thoughts. What can be said of no other, has been well, and justly, and beautifully said of this—it has God for its author, truth without any mixture of error for its matter, and salvation for its end.

The Bible has done more to bless society, to promote brotherhood, commerce, happiness, peace, and liberty, in the world, than any other book, and all other books together. How true the poet's glowing exclamation—

> "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves besides."

And if swords are ever to be beaten into ploughshares, and their shackles struck from the limbs of slaves, it is by no other instrumentality than this. And if, amid the shouts of joyful and emancipated nations, the form of Liberty is one day to rise on every shore, it shall find no firm pedestal to stand on but the word of God. At once the support and ornament of free countries and evangelical Churches, like the symbol of God's presence in the desert, that word is light in the form of a pillar.

The wealth of the poor, by blessing them with that contentment which makes poverty rich, it is also the

shield of wealth—protecting the few that are rich against the many that are poor. Wondrous book! it levels all, and yet leaves variety of ranks; it humbles the lofty, and exalts the lowliest; it condemns the best, and yet saves the worst; it engages the study of angels, and is not above the understanding of a little child; it shews us man raised to the position of a son of God, and the Son of God stooping to the condition of a man. It heals by wounding, and kills to make alive. It is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. Teaching kings how to reign and subjects how to obey, masters how to rule and domestics how to serve, pastors how to preach and people how to hear, teachers how to instruct and pupils how to learn, husbands how to love their wives and wives how to obey their husbands, it contains rules for men in all possible conditions of life. It is a guide-book for every road; a chart for every sea; a medicine for every malady; a balm for every wound; and a comfort for every grief. Divinely adapted to our circumstances, whatever these may be, we can say of this book as David said of the giant's sword, "Give me that, there is none like it." Rob us of the Bible, and our sky has lost its sun; and in other, even in the best of other books, we have naught left but the glimmer of twinkling stars. Now, my text crowns all these eulogies; like the keystone of the arch that binds all the parts of the span together, it gives the rest their power and value; for what were all the promises and prospects of this sacred volume unless we knew that they could not fail, and were as-

sured by him who is the Truth, as well as the Way and the Life, that it were "easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail?"

II. My text is true of the Bible as a Book divinely inspired.

I know a castle that, rising in old days from its rocky platform, once looked proudly down on the rolling sea. 'Ichabod" stands written on its walls—the glory is departed; and all that now remains of its ancient grandeur is a shattered curtain, and some old grey towers that are nodding to their fall. The rock where it stood so long, defiant of time and man, yielded in the course of ages to a power which, retiring yet returning with every tide, kept up a ceaseless warfare; wearing away its base, and hollowing out its solid substance into sounding caverns. Then some wild, winter night, when ships were sinking, and wives were weeping, and brave men were drowning, the sea came on in the full swing of the storm, and breached its mighty walls—sweeping masonry and rock out into the foaming deep. And now I have seen the waves breaking and the fisherman's boat sailing over the stones of that old castle's foundations; while the billows, playing with what they had conquered, rolled them smooth and round amid the shingle of the sounding beach.

In the Bible our religion stands on a rock—but not like that, a ruin of other days. Still, if our faith is not a ruin, though a majestic one, or if the Church of Christ does not stand in the world, like the decaying and deserted temple of a worn-out superstition, it is

not because the word of God has not been doubted, denied, attacked, and vilified. It has often been reviled; but it has never been refuted. Its foundations have been examined by the most searching eyes. In Hume, and Gibbon, and Voltaire, and La Place, to pass such coarse and vulgar assailants as Tom Paine and Carlisle, with their few living followers, the Bible has had to sustain the assaults of the greatest talent, the sharpest wit, and the acutest intellects. To make it appear a cunningly-devised fable, philosophers have sought arguments amid the mysteries of science, and travellers amid the hoar remains of antiquity; for that purpose, geologists have ransacked the bowels of the earth, and astronomers the stars of heaven; and yet, after sustaining the most cunningly-devised and ably-executed assaults of eighteen hundred years, there it stands; and shall stand, defiant of time, of men, of devils—a glorious illustration of the words of its Founder, "On this rock have I built my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!"

Since those eighteen hundred years began to run, what revolutions time has wrought! what changes he has seen! The oldest monarchies have been overthrown; the dawn of truth has chased away the darkness of a long night; the maxims of statesmen and the theories of science have shifted like the wind; success has crowned the boldest innovator on all old established systems Jove is gone, but not Jehovah, the Hebrew's God. On Grecian headlands and Roman hills, the temples of Jupiter stand in mouldering ruin; but temples sacred to Jesus are rising on every

shore. Since John wrote in his cell at Patmos, and Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, the world has been turned upside down; all old things have passed away; all things on earth have changed but one. Rivalling in fixedness, and more than rivalling in brightness, the stars that saw our world born and shall see it die, that rejoiced in its birth and shall be mourners at its burial, the word of our God stands for ever. Time, that weakens all things else, has but strengthened the impregnable position of the believer's faith, and hope, and confidence. And as, year by year, the tree adds another ring to its circumference, every age has added the testimony of its events to this great truth, "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord shall endure for ever."

III. For practical application of my text, I remark,—

1. It is true of the *threatenings* of the word that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

If there are more blessed there are more awful words in the Bible than in any other book, which in this respect is like the skies that hold at once the most blessed and the most baneful elements—soft dews to bathe the opening rose, and bolts that rend the oak asunder. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." For example,—The wicked shall be cast into hell,—Flee from the wrath to come,—Whosoever believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,—Except ye re-

pent ye shall all likewise perish,—Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched,—and these awful words which I cannot think of Jesus pronouncing over any one he would have saved, and, in a sense, died to save, but with slow reluctance, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." What a sentence! What words from him who bent looks of kindness on a weeping Magdalene! Here every word is stunning; crushing; killing. Depart from me—ye cursed—into everlasting fire—prepared for the devil and his angels. They fall like thunder-bolts, but where? I have read how a ship that rode the waters, armed with a broadside of cannon enough to sink any common craft, when in chase of another vessel, pointed her guns so as to send the shot crashing through the other's rigging, or leaping on the deep before her bows. Her purpose not to sink the flying sail, but wing her; and compelling her to bring to, make her captive. She might have sunk the enemy; but in so thundering she sought to save her, and make a prize of her. And just so does a long-suffering God with those that madly flee from him. Therefore the Bible threatens and thunders; not otherwise. But why flee? Vain the flight where God pursues; and worse than vain! He is willing to forgive, and what folly, what madness to fly till, divine patience at length exhausted, he ceases to follow! What then, the bolt, at first sent in love and mercy wide of the range, is shot right to the mark. Judgment, long delayed, overtakes us; and we learn, but learn too late, that

whether he threatens or promises, as a God of truth, his word shall stand for ever. "Oh, that men were wise, that they would consider this in the day of their visitation!"

"The wicked," says the Psalmist, "contemn God!" and why? "because he saith, he will not require." Where, they ask, is the promise of his coming? Ah, they forget that it is as true of God's threatenings as of his promises, that although he delays he does not deny them. A reprieve is not a pardon. It defers the execution; but does not necessarily cancel the sentence. And how many men in business, hard pressed for money, and tottering on the edge of bankruptcy, have known too well that the bill which they had got the money-lender to renew was not thereby paid? that, however often renewed, it has still to be paid? and that the oftener, indeed, it is renewed, with interest added to the capital, the debt but grows the larger, the payment grows the heavier? Just so shall it be with you if you persist in rejecting the Saviour, whom in God's name I now press on your acceptance. Every day of mercy here will but aggravate the misery of hereafter, and the reckoning, by being long in coming, will be the more terrible when it comes—as that storm roars with the loudest thunder which has been the longest gathering.

Considered, then, in the light of my text, if the offers of the gospel are most winning, how full of warning are its threatenings! Men may play with your fears. I have seen a cunning, but foolish nurse, frighten her little charge into obedience by bugbears

—stories of fleshless spectres and hideous monsters—the creations of her fancy, but the terrible object of its fears. God, however, plays neither with our hopes nor with our fears; neither mocks; nor flatters; nor deceives. "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken, and shall it not come to pass?" Believe me, that Paul had never wept, nor had Jesus died for sinners, except that their worm never dieth, and their fire is never quenched—except that, in regard to the threatenings as much as to the promises of the Bible, heaven and earth shall sooner pass, than one tittle of the law shall fail.

2. It is true of the *promises* of the gospel that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail."

The traveller in the desert has heard that, far away among its burning sands, a river rolls. He has seen, or read, or heard of those who have sat on its willowy banks, and quenched their thirst, and drank in new life, and bathed their fevered frames in its cool, crystal pools. So, though with bleeding feet, and sinking limbs, and parched throat, and dizzy brain, led on by hope, and already in imagination quenching his fiery thirst, he stoutly fights a battle for life; and at length reaches the brink. Alas! what a sight meets his fixed and stony gaze! He stands petrified. No wave, glittering in the sunbeams, ripples on the shore and invites the poor wretch to drink. The channel is full—but full of dry, white stones. The rains have failed; the

river has vanished. It saved others, him it cannot save. Victim of the bitterest disappointment, he lies down to expire; losing life where others found it. Now to such an accident, to hopes at once so fair but false, none are exposed who, rising to the call, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," seek life in Jesus—salvation in the grace of God. Have I been a wilderness unto thee, saith the Lord? No, the stream of new Covenant mercies, which has its channel in this word, had its type in those waters which, springing to the rod of Moses, gushed from the smitten rock; which the sand never drank, and the sun never dried, as, glistening in his beams, they followed Israel through the dusty desert on to the green borders of the promised land.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." For example—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; buy wine and milk without money and without price—Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest—The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely—Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved—Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth—Fear not, for I am with you, be not afraid, for I am thy God—My grace is sufficient for thee—I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." How many thousands on earth, and what a crowned, countless mul-

titude in glory, can set to their seals that these promises are true! Their light, how steady has it burned in the stormiest, how clear has it shone in life's darkest, most tempestuous night! Have not the saints of God, by help of these promises, quenched the violence of the fire; and stopped the mouths of lions; and trodden the serpent in the dust; and plucked the crown from the brow of death; and raised by the grave the shout of victory; and — still greater triumph—confronted and conquered a world in arms? Joyful thought! there is not one promise of the gospel but is as good and true as on the day it was made. None of its offers are withdrawn. It is a medicine which does not grow useless by age; a well that cannot be run dry or emptied by use. The bank of heaven, fearing no panic, nor ever suspending payment, stands before the world with open doors; ready to honour its largest bills, and meet your greatest drafts.

Crowding every avenue under an alarm of impending judgment, let this congregation, this whole city, every inhabitant of our land, the wide world, with death and hell close at their heels, make for the door of mercy; each man in tones of agony crying, Oh, if there is mercy to spare, be it mine!—I say, God were as happy as he is able to meet the wants of all; and make good the promise, Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. You cannot come too many; too often; too urgent; too needy; too guilty; and, I will add, you cannot come too soon. Come! Roll all thy guilt on the back, and weep thy sorrows out on the bosom of the Saviour. When I look to the height

of his love, lost above the stars of heaven; to the depth of his consolation, descending lower than the pit; to the kindness of his heart, fuller than the brimming ocean; to the crown in his hand gemmed with stars; when I see him afflicted in all our afflictions, and, while he leaves pearls to drop from royal crowns, and stars from shaking heavens, gathering his people's "tears in his bottle," may not I say with the great apostle, "My God shall supply all your wants out of the fullness of his glory in Jesus Christ?" Cast all your cares—cares for yourself, and for yours—cares for this world and the next, cast them on him. He careth for you!

In a nobler passage, Isaiah tells us, how all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field. And does not every week, each passing day, and fleeting hour, illustrate that solemn truth? Death lays his sharp scythe in among the grass; and to his stride and sweeping arm it falls in long, broad swathes. I have seen the reapers in the harvest-field sit down on the fallen sheaves of corn to wipe the sweat from their sun-browned brows, and, pausing from work, rest awhile; but who ever saw this grim reaper sitting on the tombstones or green hillocks of the grave, to rest himself and repair his strength? Of Death it may be said, as of God, "He sleeps not, neither is weary." See how he advances on us—every day the nearer, as before an eye that expresses no pity, and an arm that is never weary, and a scythe that never blunts, fall the tallest grass and fairest flowers! "All flesh is grass." A few years more and these sparkling eyes shall be

quenched in death ; a shroud around every form ; on every lip the seal of dusty death ; and all of us lying beneath the grassy sod, mouldering in the grave—saved, or unsaved—the never-dying soul in heaven or in hell. We shall be gone ; but not gone with us, nor with the grass and summer flowers, the word of God. It abideth. Never shall it be said of it, "The place that now knows it shall know it no more." That word shall endure for ever. Blessed truth! No such balsam for a wounded heart ; no such pillow for an aching head ; no such brand for a battle-day ; no such staff for manhood's hand, or crutch for tottering age. And what a sure anchor for the soul amid death's swelling waves, when storms are roaring on the shores of time, and wearying to be gone—crying, How long, O Lord, how long, we wait the signal to cast loose our moorings, and enter the haven of eternal rest ; to learn in crowns and thrones, the smiles of the redeemed and the Well-done and welcome of the Redeemer, that, "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail."

The Work of God.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect."—Heb. xiii. 20.

One of the most noticeable features in religious revivals is, what I might call the new power of an old gospel. A commonplace preacher, gifted with no power to stir men's passions, and pouring forth no flood of eloquence to carry assemblies along as stones are rolled before a headlong torrent, appears in the pulpit. His manner is plain; and he preaches nothing but the simplest gospel truths. Yet, as I have seen the tall reeds that fringe the margin of a lake all suddenly bend before a rising wind, so his hearers are affected. Without any apparent cause to account for the phenomena, there is, to use Ezekiel's figure, a shaking of the dry bones. Rough hands wipe tears from eyes unused to weep; and not delicate women only, but strong men are visibly and powerfully moved; sobs interrupt the speaker; truths often heard before, but no more felt than hailstones rattling on a rock, now fall like a shower of arrows; each time the bowstring sounds and a shaft flies, a sinner falls. Christ, as in the forty-fifth Psalm, appears as a mighty conqueror; the place

of his feet is glorious; and the scene forcibly recalls its words of prayer and prophecy, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty"—"Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." All are moved, and not a few converted.

How explain this extraordinary event? The key to it, perhaps, will be found in the fact that a small band of God's hidden ones have been, or are at that hour, on their knees at a throne of grace—wrestling with God, and pouring out their prayers for an outpouring of his Spirit. In such praying, more than in the eloquence of preaching, lies a minister's power. Study brings a man to the pulpit, but it is prayer that brings God here. Thus Paul, who was above the praise of the people, and held himself independent alike of their applause and censure, saying, It is a small matter for me to be judged of man's judgment, he that judgeth me is God—did not feel himself to be above their prayers. Though he insisted on the right of preachers to a sufficient maintenance; he was much more anxious that the people should pray for them than that they should pay them. He could, and that the gospel might not be hindered, he did maintain himself without aid from his hearers, saying, These hands have ministered to my necessities; he could dispense with their money, but not with their prayers. So here he affectionately entreats them, saying, "Pray for us."

And now, recalling the scene by the shores of Tyre, where the mariners, as they heaved their anchor and unfurled their sails, saw him accompanied by the dis-

ciples and a crowd of women and children, before embarking, kneel down on the sand, and part with prayers —or a scene where a father, with his family gathered round his bed, and his form propped up on pillows, lifts his emaciated hands, and with labouring breath and looks of love, commends them, "lads" and all, to the angel of the covenant; so the Apostle closes his epistle and his intercourse with the Hebrews. He had sought their prayers. He now gives them his own—saying, "The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

I. Look at the aspect in which God is here presented.

1. A God of peace.

Were we hastily and rashly to form our opinion of the character of God from the aspects and condition of this world, we might come to a different conclusion. "God of peace!" Where is peace? Read the world's past history, or survey its present condition! Has not every age been filled with wars? and what soil, from the sands of Africa to Polar snows, has not been drenched with human blood? Yonder Red Indian savage, who, armed with tomahawk, and adorned with scalps, fills the forest with his war-whoop, or with muffled steps steals on the sleeping camp to murder the aged and drag the young to slavery, has had his coun

terpart among civilized and Christian nations. Peace! Notwithstanding all the boasted progress of science and arts, and even of the gospel, the world is now bristling with arms; and hardly has the tocsin ceased in one country when it begins ringing in another. Save this sea-girt and happy isle, has not every land in Europe shaken, in our own day, to the tramp of armies; and sounded to the roar of cannon? And at this moment, mingling with the hoarse roar of the Atlantic, we seem to hear the boom of guns borne across the deep, from shores where long-gathering vengeance for negro's wrongs at length is falling—teach me the lesson, "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Failing to find peace among distracted nations, and imagining that she may have fled for an asylum to the fanes of religion, do we seek her in the house of God? Alas! It is a house divided against itself. The Church of Christ has been rent asunder into I know not how many factious divisions. "Set on fire of hell," the fire catching the bad passions of human nature, she has burst into fragments like an exploding shell. Disappointed of finding peace there, do we turn our steps to the domestic circle? We seek her in the family, and follow the mourners from a father's grave to see them clinging to each other; alas, we are startled by loud, discordant, angry voices—brothers and sisters are quarrelling over the spoil. One asylum on earth remains to which she may have fled. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh;" and, like a lonely bird, peace may be quietly nestling in each man's bosom. No. Till Christ bring to it the peace of God, bidding the

waves and winds be still, man's heart is agitated by many violent passions. Burning with hatred, or devoured by jealousy, or shaken with fears, or racked with remorse, or tortured by desires it feels but cannot satisfy, his bosom a nest of scorpions and "a cage of every unclean bird," the wicked man has no peace. He cannot; for the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Unconverted man is at peace—neither with himself, nor with others, nor with God. Shall we therefore conclude from this view of the world that he who is at once its Maker and Monarch is not a God of peace? Assuredly not. He had nothing to do with this miserable condition of affairs; and is neither to be judged by it, nor blamed for it. In a fatal hour, sin was admitted into our world; and the ship that takes a Jonah aboard parts with peace. She has nothing to look for but thunders and lightnings, and storms and tempests. But let God have his way, only let his will be done in earth as it is done in heaven, and such a change were wrought on this world, as would recall the change that night saw on Galilee, when Jesus woke, and, rising in the boat, looked out on the tumbling sea, to say, "Peace, be still"—and in a moment there was a great calm; and the lake lay around them like a glassy mirror, reflecting in its bosom the stars and peace of heaven. Let only this one commandment, "Love one one another as I have loved you," be instantly and universally operative, there never were another cannon cast; nor sword forged; nor quarrel bred; nor blow struck;

nor man enslaved ; nor shore invaded ; nor use made of drum and trumpet but to sound the jubilee of universal peace. Sin banished the peace which God has sent his Son to restore ; and when this world is won over to Christ, and the crowns of earth, like those of heaven, are laid at his feet, then shall God be known as the God, and our world shall become again the abode of peace.

2. God has made peace.

"Fury is not in me, saith the Lord." He has turned from the fierceness of his anger, and made peace between himself and man by the blood of the cross ; but not "peace at any price"—at the expense of his honour, holiness, justice, law, or truth. No. God has not overlooked the guilt of sin ; he pardons, but does not palliate it.

Peace, as has often been done between man and man, may be established on a false basis. Take for example those States of America where brother now stands armed against brother. Before they were actually rent asunder, they might have established a peace on the foundations of iniquity. Had they given ear to preachers who perverted the word of God, and, regarding slavery as the white man's right, and not the black man's wrong, had they joined hand to hand to sacrifice the interests of humanity to those of commerce, and the eternal laws of God to those of political expediency, they might have had peace instead of war. They might have cemented their union with the blood of slaves. But such a peace as that would have offered a complete contrast to the peace of the gospel. This

preserves God's honor. Not "peace at any price," it is peace at such a price as satisfied the utmost demands of his law, and fully vindicated his holiness in the sight of the universe. For, see, by the cross where Jesus hung, mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace are embracing each other; and there the great God appears as just, "and also the justifier of all those who believe in Jesus."

"Be justice done," said a noble heathen, "though heaven should fall;" but little did he who uttered that great sentiment fancy at what expense justice might be done. Here a greater than heaven falls. God spares not his own Son; and by that immense sacrifice establishes such a peace between himself and our guilty world, that now all sin may be pardoned, and every sinner saved. Believing in Jesus, you are at peace with God—at peace with his justice; at peace with his law; at peace with your own conscience. You have no sins henceforth to answer for. You have nothing to fear in the hour of death. You have nothing to dread at the day of judgment. Christ has paid your debt, and satisfied for your sins; and, fully reconciled to you by the blood of his Son, a just and holy God has no quarrel with you now. Christ's dying legacy is, "peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you;" and richer with that than banks could make you, "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." That righteousness should satisfy our conscience, which has satisfied our God. "Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

II. He brought Christ from the dead.

1. In one sense the glory of his resurrection belongs to Christ himself.

Should we hear of a man sinking the first day under the attack of a fever that commonly takes ten or twenty days to run its course—well in the morning and a corpse at night, we should not be more astonished than Pilate was when told that Christ was dead. Like the earth that shook in terror at the crime, like the graves that opened to show the sheeted dead, like the sun that hid his face, refusing to look on the scene, this sudden death was contrary to the course of nature. Dead! dead in a few hours where men take days to die! dead, with the two thieves still alive, and writhing on the neighbouring crosses! Notwithstanding his drooping head, and glazed eye, and still, motionless form, it seemed impossible! Besides, when men are dying, they speak low, not loud. You must bend, as we have often done, over the pillow to catch the whisper of bloodless lips; but that cry, "It is finished," which sounded loud and clear from the cross, was less like the low, faint voice of a dying victim, than the battle shout of a victor who has won the fight, and stands with the foe beneath his feet. Strange that Jesus should die so soon! What if it were an attempt to escape the hands of justice? To defeat that and make all sure, a soldier, raising a long spear, buries the shining steel in his blessed side—to see it, on being withdrawn from the seat of life, followed by a gush of blood and water, the emblems of our redemption.

Strange as it seemed, it is still possible to explain

our Lord's death by natural causes. The very perfection of his nature made him, more than other men are, liable to injury; just as the finer the mechanism, the more easily deranged the machine. Then think how the four and twenty hours were filled up that preceded his death—the parting with his disciples; the pain of Judas' treachery; the mysterious agony of the garden; the exhaustion of the bloody sweat; the long night filled with mockery, and insult, and suffering; the trial; the scourging; the rude usage of a brutal soldiery; his sorrow for weeping women and a fainting mother. Suffering these, I can fancy our Lord's strength exhausted, and himself more than half dead ere he reached Mount Calvary; as ready to die, as a vast stone that has had the subsoil washed away by summer rains and winter snows is to leave its base at the slightest touch, and roll down to the bottom of the hill.

Yet our Lord's death, so strange in its suddenness, may be otherwise accounted for. It was in a peculiar sense his own act. In no case do we lay down our lives. Who dies a natural death has his life taken from him; who commits suicide throws his away. But in dying, our Lord was like a man who says, I have done my work, completed my task, and I will now go to rest—I have paid the debt, and I will now leave the prison—I have fought the battle and won it, and I will now go home. The only thing else I have now to give, Jesus might say, is my life; and there it is. Of my own will, by my own, free, spontaneous act, I lay it down. All your wretched tools and cruel tor-

tures, your crown of thorns and bloody cross, cannot deprive me of life. No. If I could create bread as fast as it was eaten, could not I create blood as fast as it flows away? It is not you that take away my life; nor is it God. It is not taken away—but given; for I have power to lay it down, as I have power to take it up again. Hence our Lord's claim on our love and gratitude. He gave himself for us dying "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

But he who said, "I have power to lay down my life," also said, "I have power to take it up again"—as he had before intimated, when the Jews having asked a sign of him, he said, referring to his body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Some men have a strange power of awaking from sleep whenever they please. They resolve to sleep three, or three times three hours; and, as if a trumpet was blown at their ear, they wake at the time. True to a minute, they have hardly opened their eyes when the clock strikes the hour. More strange still, many have not only slept, but some have even swooned and come out of the trance at the very time they fixed on. Curious, and to a great extent inexplicable, as these cases are, we know that there is a spirit within the body, lodged in the brain, and lord of the house, to assert the supremacy of the mind over matter, and stir up the sleeping senses at the appointed hour.

But fancy a man, ere he dies, settling the day and date of his resurrection; and, greatest of miracles, as yon tomb has witnessed, raising himself! Here is that wonder of wonders! Bowing his head on the

cross, Christ gives up the ghost. The body the women swathe is stiff; cold the feet that Mary kisses; fixed, and glassy, and filmy, the eyes his mother looks on, and bloody and mangled the form she receives in her arms as they lower it slowly and tenderly from the cross; and for three days nothing distinguished this from other corpses, but that it assumes no sign of corruption. As perfumes give their odours to the vessel that holds them, it seems as if his pure soul had imparted somewhat of its virtues to his body; for though dead it suffers no decay; no smell of the charnel house fills that tomb; his pale countenance, as if carved out of marble, is beautiful as ever. The grave sits by and looks on its captive, but does not dare to touch him; and there he lies like a king asleep in a prison, the grimmest warder standing in reverence of one on whom the door is locked, to be thrown open at his bidding. At length the door is opened; but none enter to wake the sleeper. The angel rolls away the stone and sits on it; with eager eye watching the great event. All yet is wrapped in gloom. Within and without is the deepest silence—no sound breaking the stillness but the distant footfall of the guards, that, panic struck, fly the celestial apparition. Suddenly the body stirs; of his own accord the dead rises; and, dropping the garments of death, Jesus steps forth on the dewy ground. He has broken the prison, bound the jailer, and spoiled him of his keys; and Faith hears voices as of angels singing away up among the stars, "O Death, where is thy sting? and, O Grave, where is thy victory?"

2. Here our Lord's resurrection is attributed to God.

Here unquestionably; but not here only. For God is elsewhere represented as protecting the dead body of his Son. Standing between it and the greedy grave, he guards it as a mother would her child's from howling wolves!—as Rizpah did her seven sons, hanging on one gibbet, from the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field. In words which were addressed to God, and could only be applied to Christ, the Psalmist says, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." But the Bible, which attributes the preservation of Christ's body to God, also attributes its resurrection to him. Paul says, "He hath raised up Jesus again;" and to the day of his resurrection, as in some respects throwing his birthday into the shade, the same apostle applies these words, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,"—as if he came from Joseph's tomb, more evidently and more gloriously God's begotten Son, than from the virgin's womb. From that womb he came, a feeble infant, to save the world; but from this tomb he comes, a mighty conqueror, having saved it. There, with the angel spectators of the fight, he enters the field a combatant; but here, with angels attending his triumph, borne high on his shield, wearing the crown of resurrection, declared to be the Son of God with power, he ascends to his Father—the gates of heaven thrown open to the cry, "Lift up your heads, ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in."

His resurrection is thus the work of God; the crown of his labours; the token of his acceptance; the fruit of his death. The God of peace raises him from the dead, not simply by his almighty power, but "through the blood of the everlasting covenant;" his own blood—as if the blood that washes away our sins, sprinkled on his dead face, restored him to life; sprinkled on the chains of death, dissolved them; sprinkled on the doors of the grave, threw them open! Most precious and potent blood! May it be sprinkled in red showers from God's hand on us! If that blood, in a sense, gave life to a dead Christ, shall it not impart life to us? Yes. Through its power, dead with him to sin, crucified with him to the flesh, and buried with him in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we rise to newness of life; and at the last trumpet's call, set free from death as well as sin—bondmen no more—we shall rise from watery graves and dusty tombs to show corruption changed into incorruption, and mortal into immortality. Then shall death be swallowed up in victory. In conclusion—

1. Look at this aspect of Christ as the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

How many are the elements of his greatness! He is a divine Shepherd. He is a royal Shepherd—with a crook in his hand, he wears a crown on his head; and unlike other shepherds, who in the East dwell in tents, and here in the lowly cottages of lonely glens, his home is a palace, and his servants are the angels of heaven. Think on the number of teachers, preachers, pastors, ministers, who throughout all the

countries and climes of earth, are feeding his flocks; and how many are the shepherds he has under him. Indeed, those who bear the greatest names in his church are, though leaders, but part of the flock; he himself being the only Shepherd, Bishop, and Overseer of souls. He said, I have sheep that are not of this fold; and think of the numbers of his flock scattered in all regions of the world! When the last day gathers them together, and angels' hands have separated them from the goats, the earth has no plain spacious enough to hold that flock—the ransomed multitude which no man can number. Well, therefore, may he be called the Great Shepherd, and for this reason, also, that the whole earth, from pole to pole and sea to sea, is his pasture-ground!—"The world is his, and the fullness thereof."

Nor here, as sometimes happens among men, is greatness separated from that goodness which is the best property of the two. We would rather be good than great. But both properties, infinite in measure, meet in Christ. Paul calls him the Great, but he calls himself the Good Shepherd. He says, "I am the Good Shepherd." How worthy of the title! How tender he is to weak and feeble Christians! He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom; and gently leads those that are with young. His sheep are not reared for the butcher's knife. They are not given over to hirelings; but he, placing himself at their head, leads them forth to green pastures and by still waters. Making such full provision for his people that they can sing, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall

not want," he sets such high value on his flock, that if even one should stray and be "ready to perish," he seeks the wanderer till it is found. Home, if I may say so, has no delights for Jesus till he find the lost one; and returns with it on his shoulders, to call on angels and saints to rejoice with him that the lost is found. The Good Shepherd, in these aspects of his character, Jesus is especially and emphatically so in this, that he laid down his life for the sheep. He made his soul an offering for sin, suffering and dying for us; and therefore the voice of God in that mysterious call, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow; and smite the shepherd." See there the sinless, well-beloved, eternal Son standing before his Father—heaven looking on in wondering silence. The sword of justice is unsheathed. Once before, when it emptied many a throne in heaven, the angels had seen it flash, and their fallen compeers, shrieking from its wounds, rush headlong down to hell, like the herd into the depths of Galilee. But now, the Father sheathes that glittering sword in the bosom of his Son. He falls; he groans; he dies—the just for the unjust. "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." And gathering now in wonder, and sorrow, and awe, around the dead body of the shepherd, can we think of the dignity of the sufferer, and the greatness of the ransom, of the pangs that rent his body, and of the sorrows that rung his heart without exclaiming,—How great was thy mercy toward me; how great should be

my gratitude and love to thee! "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

2. Let us glance at Paul's prayer.

"The God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you *perfect* in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." Make you perfect! Could I express for you a better wish, or could you aim at a better object? It is a high, but, thank God, not a hopeless aim. What though, when you would rise, you feel the world and the flesh binding you down as by chains of iron and affliction? No chains are too strong for him, who, bringing Jesus from the dead, burst the fetters of the tomb? If God, in the person of his beloved Son, has set a man on the throne of the great universe—exalting him high above angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, principalities and powers, is he not able to raise us to humbler thrones? Is not that which he has done for our Surety a most sure and glorious pledge of what he shall do for his people? Where the head is, all the members, the humblest of them, one day shall be. Even as the oil of frankincense and myrrh and cassia, which was poured on the high priest's head, descended in fragrant streams to the very skirts of his garments—the parts that swept the dust, so shall the grace that was poured on Christ without measure, descend to sanctify and gladden the meanest of his people. Imbued with his Spirit, and sanctified by his

grace, all who belong to him shall be at length and at last made meet for heaven; and brought to it as certainly as at the great exodus everything that pertained to Israel was brought out of Egypt! "Not a hoof was left behind."

I know that we are not perfect yet; far from it! In our imitation of Christ, how unlike is the fairest copy to the great original! Still there is no ground for despair. Perfect freedom from the power of sin, perfect obedience to the precepts and spirit of the law, perfect harmony to the mind and perfect conformity to the image of God, are within the bond, sealed with blood; and also in the prayer, "I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." Let not your souls, therefore, be cast down by past failures. Rise to renew your attempts, saying with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why is my spirit disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Yes. Hope in God! Who loses hope, loses the battle. Let perfection always be your aim—nothing below it. Seeking strength from on high, rise from your knees to try it again, and again, and again; and you will find that every true, earnest, prayerful effort raises you higher, and still higher, on the Rock of Ages. Let every day see some work done; some battle fought; some victory won. Rise every morning to make a new start for heaven; and let every sun that sets leave you a day's journey nearer it. Work on; press on; fight on. Do the best you can! live the best you can; get all the good you can; do all the good

you can; do it at all times you can; do it to all men you can; do it in all the ways you can. And God working in you by his Spirit, both to will and to do of his good pleasure, you shall rise step by step, onward and upward, to perfection; till, mounting as on eagle's wings, you arrive at the gates of glory, and in you a perfect heaven receives a perfect saint.

The Lamb of God.

"Behold the Lamb of God."—John i. 36.

Born without taste, as others are without an ear for music, some have no sympathy with nature. In them, the earth "sown with orient pearl," bush and tree hung with sparkling diamonds, the snow-crowned hills, valleys gaily robed in flowers and smiling in sunshine, the spacious sea, the star-spangled sky, breed no admiration; and leave them as unable to appreciate the beauties of a lovely landscape, as the cattle that browse on its pastures. Yet there are scenes in nature that may disappoint one who has the keenest enjoyment in a beautiful landscape—the liveliest sympathy with whatever is grand or lovely. Such a man travels far, and, climbing rugged crag, or steep mountain, toils hard that he may feast his eyes on some famous prospect. His expectations are raised to the highest pitch. At length, panting, exhausted, he arrives at the summit; and at the cry of his guide, Behold! looks round to be disappointed. It does not repay the trouble; it was not worth the toil. Now, such disappointment awaits none who, responding to the call, Behold the Lamb of God, have turned their eyes on Christ. With a clear, unclouded view, the sight is ravishing. Hea-

ven and earth, angels and men, to use Paul's words, are "perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment;" and Jesus, to quote the language of an old, holy song, is declared to be "the chiefest among ten thousand, and"—what none else are—"altogether lovely."

Accustomed from childhood to see the starry host come forth, night by night, to march in silent grandeur above our heads, the scene attracts little attention; many walking beneath that spangled dome, nor ever, the whole year through, turning a look of wonder on it. And thus also, in those who have been born and bred up by its shores, familiarity with the ocean, whether its waves sleep in summer sunshine or foam and rage in wintry tempests, breeds a measure of indifference.

But who, for the first time, has seen the Almighty's hand in the snowy Alps, or heard his voice in the thunders of Niagara, without dumb surprise? Our emotions are strange, new, and inexpressible; and we pronounce such sublime and surpassing grandeur to be beyond the power of words to describe; of colours to paint; of fancy to imagine. To appreciate, you must see them. And if the brightest colours of prose, or of poetry's glowing fancy, do no justice to such scenes, what words can set forth the graces and matchless merits of the Saviour? Put an angel—a seraph in the pulpit; and give him Christ for his theme! The subject is greater than his powers; the flight beyond his wing; the song above his compass. He were the first to say, when called to describe the glories and

beauty, the majesty and mercy, that meet in Jesus, Who is sufficient for these things? To appreciate him, you must see and know him. Yes. You might sit there, and listen all your life long to no other theme, you might hear every sermon that had been preached, you might read every hymn that had been sung, you might study every book that had been written about Christ, and after all, on arriving in heaven, you would stand before the throne to lift your hands in rapt, mute astonishment—on recovering speech, to exclaim with Sheba's queen, "I had heard of thee in mine own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom; howbeit the half was not told me. Happy are thy men; happy thy servants"—and happy I to be allowed to take rank with them.

Any view of Christ which the greatest preacher in the highest flight of genius ever set before his audience, must be feeble compared with the reality. Paint and canvas cannot give the hues of the rainbow, or the beams of the sun—unless by representations so poor as in many instances to excite contempt, and in all astonishment, that any artist could attempt what so far exceeds the powers of cold, dull paint. No more can words describe the Saviour's glory. Nay, what is the most glowing and ecstatic view that the highest faith of a soul, hovering on the borders of another world, ever obtained of Christ, compared with the reality? It is like the sun changed by a frosty fog-bank into a dull, red, copper ball—shorn of the splendour that no mortal's eyes can look on.

In directing your attention, therefore, to Jesus

Christ, I do not pretend to do my subject justice; but only attempt, with God's blessing, to do you some good by directing your attention to one or two aspects of his life and character. By these, may the Holy Spirit of promise awaken faith in the unbelieving, and inflame the love of Christ's own, loving, chosen people.

I. Behold Christ before he came to this world.

The measure of our Lord's humiliation is that of his original exaltation. Nor can we know how low he stooped to save us, till we know the height from whence he came. Came? Did he not come of humble parentage; and was not his birth-place a stable? That starting-point may satisfy those who have formed no higher idea of Jesus than as a man of rare perfections, the pattern and paragon of every human virtue. But we know better—see further into the "mystery of godliness." God manifest in the flesh, he had a higher origin than Bethlehem. He was of a nobler descent than Mary; and sprung of an older and more royal ancestry than Judah's kings. The lowly spring that wells up among the vineyards or green pastures of the Alpine valley, draws its waters from above—their source those inaccessible and eternal snows, whose spotless bosom bears no stain, nor print of human foot. So was it with Jesus.

To be sprung of humble parentage puts no shame on us. No man need blush for the mother that bore him, because, treading life's lowly paths, she had to spin, or weave, or toil, to earn his bread. Who does so has cause to be ashamed, not of her, but of himself—his

pride meaner than her lot could be. Claiming the highest ancestry, our Lord was not ashamed of Mary. She was his mother ; and mother was a word as dear and sacred to him as to us. He honoured her ; he met her wish with miracles ; he owned her on his cross ; true to nature, his dying look was turned on his mother ; and though family relationships do not subsist in heaven as here, there he will acknowledge her his mother. Not that Mary is, as Papists call her, the mother of God, or queen of heaven, to whom we are to address our prayers, and pay an inferior worship, that we may secure her influence with her son. Still, though shrinking from such profanity, with angels we pronounce her blessed. Honour be to Mary's memory ! She was, and shall ever be, the mother of the man Christ Jesus—the man of the cross that redeemed the world ; the man on the throne who rules the universe. " God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

But it is to an older and higher than this mediatorial throne to which he has been exalted, that we are to look, if we would discover the heights from whence Jesus came to save us. Unlike an earthly palace that holds but one king, the wide extent of heaven is crowded with thrones. They are filled by the saints ; among whom, if Christ's we shall take rank—kings and priests to God for ever. Amid these, though not

far removed, rises the throne of the Mediator—spanned by a rainbow, and encircled by angel hosts, and occupied by him on whose glorious form all eyes are centered; to whose praise all harps are tuned; and at whose feet, once nailed to a cross, thousands of glittering crowns are cast, as the purchase of his blood and the gift of his grace. There Jesus sits among his saints, King in an assembly of kings. But above all these, high and lifted up, in the unscaled heights of Godhead, casting the shadow of its glory over the boundless universe, rises the throne of the Ancient of days; days that had no beginning, and years that shall have no end. Now, ere he assumed our nature, and descended on our world to save it, the Son of God was there—there before Mary bore him, or Mary herself was born—there before Adam was made—there before there was sin, or death, or life—there before worlds had begun to roll, or time had begun to run—there before sun ever shone, or bright angels sang. Here now we are at the fountain-head; if we can speak of having reached that, even on fancy's wing which stretches away into the boundless mysteries of eternity. Hear how our Lord speaks of himself,—

"I was th' Almighty's chief delight
From everlasting days,
Ere yet his arm was stretchéd forth
The heav'ns and earth to raise.

"Before the sea began to flow,
And leave the solid land,
Before the hills and mountains rose,
I dwelt at his right hand.

"When first he rear'd the arch of heav'n,
And spread the clouds on air,
When first the fountains of the deep
He open'd, I was there.

"There I was with him, when he stretch'd
His compass o'er the deep,
And charged the ocean's swelling waves
Within their bounds to keep.

"With joy I saw th' abode prepared
Which men were soon to fill:
Them from the first of days I loved,
Unchanged, I love them still."

There are dark depths of ocean where man never dropped his sounding line; there are heights in the blue heavens where the air was never stirred by an eagle's wing; and there are regions of truth which angels never explored—their eye never scanned, and their feet never trode. And such—the deepest of all doctrines, the profoundest of all mysteries, yet the strongest of all our confidences—is this, that He who expired for us on Calvary was, not as men and angels are, the created, but the Eternal Son of God. In this truth I see the love of God, brighter than a sun; by this line I measure the love of Christ, deeper than the sea. It was this, that he was co-equal with the Father, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; that he was not less God than man; that under the garment of humanity, so rudely rent, divinity stood concealed; that the brow wounded by thorns, had worn the crown of heaven; that the hand nailed to the tree, had held the scales of fate, and swayed the sceptre of the universe;—it was

this that struck Paul with such astonishment, and called from his lips an expression that finds a ready echo in every believer's heart, "The breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

II. Behold Christ on earth—in his humiliation.

Follow him in his descent from heaven on his mission of mercy. What a descent! Who has looked into a gulf so dark and profound? Philosophers expatiate with wonder on the inconceivable distances of the fixed stars; and we attempt in vain to fancy the space that stretches between our world and orbs so remote that, notwithstanding its speed, light takes six thousand years to perform its journey between some of them and us; so that, marvellous to tell, the rays of light which we saw last night left the star about the time that man was made, or our world was shaken by the Fall. Still, that distance, though not to be conceived, may be measured. You can express it by numbers; but how immeasurable, as well as inconceivable, the distance between the throne of the Eternal and the stable of Bethlehem; the bosom of God and the breast of Mary!

People are fond of tracing rivers from their mouths to their distant sources; and Bruce, the traveller, pronounced it the proudest moment of his life, when he stood, as he fancied, at the lofty fountains of the Nile. But when we trace the waters of life to their earthly source, how lowly the spring where they well up into light! Would you see it? Bow thy head; enter this

stable; and in this stall, whence beasts have been turned out to accommodate a woman in her hour of sorrow, look into the manger; gently raise the rough, swaddling cloth; and there, in a feeble creature that, disturbed, sends up an infant's wail, Behold the Lamb of God—the Love of God—the Saviour of the world!

Look again! When times were hard, and work was scarce, and men had to leave their homes to seek about for bread, did you ever meet a houseless family; and see the mother, as they trudged along the wild moor, trying with scanty coverings to protect her infant from the pelting rain and storm? In some such plight, Behold the Lamb of God! The holy family are flying to Egypt. Mary has seized her child; and, pressing it to her bosom, has rushed into the tempest, and the dark night, and on untravelled paths, to save its infant life from the massacre of Bethlehem—the bloody sword of Herod!

Look again! On some stormy night, when the wind howled in the chimney, and the rain beat on the window, and the wild beast was driven back to his lair, and mothers that had boys at sea, trembling for their fate, betook themselves to prayer, did you ever, hastily summoned to the bed of the dying, pass some outcast crouching in the shelter of a doorway, or lying with weary head pillowed on a cold, stone step? Whatever you may have felt, Jesus, up in heaven, had a fellow-feeling for that houseless man. Lord of Glory! he had been such an outcast; an outcast from human kindness—every door he sought, shut in his face. What man ever uttered a more touching plaint than his: "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but

the Son of man hath not where to lay his head?" Stretched on the cold ground, no roof to shelter him, his locks wet with the dews of night, Behold the Lamb of God—an outcast from man, that you might cease to be outcast from God! Herein is love indeed.

These sorrows were but the muttering thunder, the first big drops that precede the bursting of the storm. It came roaring on; and would you behold the Lamb of God in the great suffering and work of sacrifice, look here! Pass into this garden: draw near with reverent step. Praying in an agony, sweating great drops of blood, prostrate on the ground, "see thy lover lowly laid, and hear the groans that rend his breast." Follow the prisoner to the judgment-hall: blood streaks his face, trickling from a crown of thorns—the wreath our sins wove for his royal brow, and "the crown with which his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals." Go out with him to the crowded street; he faints; louder now the wail of women, deeper now the curses of cruel men, as, disfigured with blood and dust, his blessed head lies on the hard stones—yet not so hard as pitiless hearts. With the procession, pass on to Calvary. They cast him roughly on the ground; they nail his quivering limbs to the tree; and now it rises slowly over the surging crowd that rend the astonished air with shouts and savage yells of triumph. Now, Behold the Lamb of God! see the blood of redemption streaming; see the cloud of desertion deepening; see the tide of life departing as the glaze gathers on his eyes, and the sword in a Father's hand is passed deeper and deeper into his heart! Heark to

to the awful cry that rises, loud and clear, in the stillness of the darkness, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Death has done his work; and when kind hands have taken down the body, and borne it slowly to the tomb, look there! You have looked on the face of the dead, but never on one that loved you half so well. You have kissed brows as icy cold, but death never stilled a heart so warm and true to you. No lips ever prayed for you like these; nor hand ever wrought for you like that from which the women wipe the clotted blood; nor eyes ever wept for you like those their fingers gently, tenderly, close amid a flood of tears. Behold the Lamb of God, slain for your sins! Mary bends over the dear body; kisses the cold feet; washes the bloody wounds; and spreads out a bed of spices. Well she may! He had been a kind Lord to her; but not kinder than he will prove to any, to all who kneel with that blessed woman at his feet—weeping, longing, loving suppliants for saving mercy. Behold, and believe! Herein is love indeed; not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and gave himself for us; suffering for sins—the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

III. Let this Lamb of God be the supreme object of our desires, and the sole object of our faith. Be this our language:—

> "Jesus, my Lord! I know his name,
> His name is all my boast;
> Nor will he put my soul to shame,
> Nor let my hope be lost."

To a sinner's ear there is no music on earth, nor in the golden harps of heaven, like the name of Jesus. Music in its sound, there is ointment in its meaning. Fragrant as the spikenard of the alabaster box, "his name is as ointment poured forth." If but his name be such a blessed thing, what must the sight of him be? To see Jesus clearly with the eye of faith, is to see the deep opening a way from Egypt's to freedom's shore; is to see the water gush, full and sparkling from the desert rock; is to see the serpent gleaming on its pole over a dying camp; is to see the life-boat coming when our bark is thumping on the bank, or ground on rocks by foaming breakers; is to see a pardon when the noose is round our neck and our foot is on the drop. No sight in the wide world like Jesus Christ, with forgiveness on his lips, and a crown in his blessed hand! This is worth laboring for; praying for; living for; suffering for; dying for. You remember how the prophet's servant climbed the steeps of Carmel. Three years, and never cloud had dappled the burning sky—three long years, and never a dewdrop had glistened on the grass, or wet the lips of a dying flower; but the cloud came at last. No bigger than a man's hand, it rose from the sea; it spread; and as he saw the first lightnings flash, and heard the first thunders roll, how did he forget all his toils! and would have climbed the hill, not seven, but seventy times seven times, to hail that welcome sight!

It is so with sinners so soon as their eyes are gladdened with a believing sight of Christ; when they have got Christ; and with him peace. Be it that you

have to climb the hill of prayer, not seven, but seven thousand times, such a sight shall more than reward all your toil. Pray on; for it is not on their feet, but on their knees that men climb to heaven. What though, like good old Simeon, we have to wait for "consolation" till our eye is dim and our hair is grey?—a sight of Jesus lights up the dull eye, and warms up the cold blood of age. Are there any who have been long looking, waiting, praying; and yet cannot say with any confidence that they have found the Lord? Let them draw comfort from the case of him who waited in the temple for the "consolation of Israel" till his eyes grew dim, and his head turned white with age. Be assured that your prayers are not forgotten! They are in God's books; and your tears are in his bottle. The vision may tarry, but come it will. The Saviour will come; hope will come; peace at length will come; the happy day shall come when, as Simeon took the babe in his aged arms to kiss it, and blessing, worshipping, rejoiced over it, thou also shall throw thy arms around thy Saviour, to exclaim, "Jesus, thou art all my salvation and all my desire—whom have I in heaven but thee? there is none on all the earth whom I desire besides thee."

Holy Spirit, so reveal the Lamb of God to us that we shall long to be with him; and cry, like exiles on this earth, Oh to be where Jesus is! Not impatient, yet finding little to detain us here, may the old man's wish hang on our lips: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. When the sand burned their feet, and the hot sun scorch-

ed their heads, and the desert's howling waste lay all around them, how did they, who saw the purple clusters of Eshcol, long to be where the vine-trees grew! And see, so soon as Simeon has the babe in his arms, how he wearies to leave the earth and ascend to heaven! Till his eyes were gladdened with a sight of Jesus, perhaps he was afraid of death, and with his old palsied hands clung to the world; afraid to let go and drop. But with the infant Saviour in his arms—and on a man in whom Christ is the hope of glory, what a change! In our Saviour's presence Death lowers his colours; grounds his arms; drops his dart. As Jesus puts on his crown, Death puts off his; as Jesus stands arrayed in his glories, Death stands disrobed of his terrors, so that a saint, sometimes transported with the view, feels as if he could spurn the earth, and soar to heaven on eagle's wings—his opinion Paul's. "To be absent from the body, and present with the Lord, is far better."

The Love of Christ.

"Thy love to me was wonderful."—2 Samuel i. 26.

These words form a part of the most touching and beautiful eulogium which the profoundest grief and the finest genius ever uttered. On reading it, one is left in doubt of which art David was the greatest master; whether it was in the use of the pen, the harp, or the sword. Jonathan found in him one worthy to preserve his memory, and record his remarkable virtues; and David's genius has preserved these like fragrant spikenard in a box of alabaster, or, as I have seen, a drop of water shrined within the crystal of a precious stone.

It is due to the Psalmist to remark that this noble panegyric does no less honour to his heart than to his head. Remember that the death of Saul has removed the only obstacle that stood between David and the throne, and had rid him of an enemy who had pursued him for some years with rancorous and unrelenting hatred. It is a common and a just saying that we should say no ill of the dead. They are not here to defend themselves; and, unless where great interests are concerned, their ashes should not be disturbed. In his circumstances the utmost required of David would

have been to preserve a decent and becoming silence about Saul, burying all recollections of him in the grave. But he was incapable of this; he was cast in a finer mould; he was made of nobler metal. His generous heart, forgiving and forgetting every wrong, warmed at the recollection of those early, happy days, when the king drew the shepherd boy from obscurity, received him into the bosom of his family, showered royal favours on his head; and when, harp in hand, he threw the chains of music over Saul's stormy passions, bidding the waves be still. David has buried Saul's faults in the grave, "earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes." But while he leaves the dross to lie undisturbed among the cold embers, he brings out the gold —the finer elements of Saul's character; and without, after the fashion of many lying tombstones, imputing to him virtues which he never possessed, he tells all the good of Saul he can, and crowns his memory with the honours due to a king, a dutiful son, a kind-hearted father, and a man as brave as ever faced a foe. "From the blood of the slain," he sings, "from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives, and in their death they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."

But Jonathan is the grand subject of this beautiful lament; the principal figure in the canvas. As in the case of others who have been the parents of distinguished children, the father here owes much of his celebrity to the son. Many a son has had a better

father, but what father ever had such a son! In some respects, at least, Jonathan stands without a rival in all history, sacred or profane. Had we known him better, no doubt we might have thought less of him, we would have found some faults in him, and that it was true of him as of the best of fallen men, that the brightest sun is dimmed by spots. Yet there is no fault recorded of Jonathan; and, conferring on him more honour than on any one else whose name stands in this sacred book, God has not left a stain to blot his memory. If there ever was friendship in this world, pure, unalloyed by any inferior metal, disinterested, free of envy, without any element of selfishness, incapable of harbouring a suspicious thought, and incapable of rejoicing in another's gain, even to his own loss, it had glowed in the bosom that now lay cold on Gilboa's mountains. Battle spear never pierced such a generous heart; nor had war ever such a graceful victim offered at her blood-stained shrine. Men never possessed a friend such as David lost in Jonathan; for he stood in his love as much above the common crowd of men, as his father did in stature—towering head and shoulders high above the assembled tribes of Israel. If ever man loved his neighbour as he did himself, that man was Jonathan; and none with a head and heart can read his tragic history without feeling that he was worthy of this extraordinary, but not extravagant, laudation, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

Jonathan rests in honour. Let him rest. A greater than Jonathan is here. Yet let us not forget the

honour due to the grace of God which purified, exalted, sanctified his fine natural temper; bringing out its excellencies as the art of the polisher does the beautiful veins that lie concealed in the rough plank, or the colours that flash and glow in some precious stone. He was content that David should supplant him. God had so determined; "even so Lord, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." And I cannot believe that anything but a gracious resignation to the divine will could have welded his heart to David's under such irritating, trying, circumstances. Silent as Scripture is on Jonathan's religious character, in the story of this matchless, and more than romantic friendship, I see the heavenly fruit of piety. Peace be to his ashes, and honour to his memory! We turn to a nobler subject; and although I think I would not pluck a leaf from his laurels, I cannot, nor could any one else, read the words of my text without thinking of a greater than Jonathan.

As we muse on these words, Gilboa vanishes, and Calvary rises to view. The battle scene, with Jonathan standing like a lion at bay, or, faint from loss of blood, sinking beneath his wounds, shifts; and I see Jesus standing alone amid the impious crowd, or fainting beneath his cross in the streets of Jerusalem. The hill where, in the pale moonlight, all stiff and stark and bloody, Jonathan lies surrounded by heaps of dead, his face to heaven and his foot to the foe that have fallen before his arm, gives place to another scene. A tall cross tops the summit of Mount Cavalry; and the sun's level beams

shine on the drooping head and mangled, bloody form of the Son of God. To him these words best belong. We hang the harp of David on that cross; and, Jonathan himself consenting, we take this garland from his brows, to weave it into the crown of thorns —saying, as we turn to Jesus, "thy love to me was wonderful."

I. The love of Christ to us is wonderful, because there was nothing in us lovely.

In the spangled sky, the rainbow, the woodland hung with diamonds, the sward sown with pearly dew, the rosy dawn, the golden clouds of even, the purple mountains, the hoary rock, the blue boundless main, Nature's simplest flower, or some fair form of laughing child or lovely maiden, we cannot see the beautiful without admiring it. That is one law of our nature. Another is, that so far as earthly objects are concerned, and apart from the beauty of holiness, we cannot help loving what is lovely, and regarding it with affection. Our affections are drawn to an attractive object as naturally as iron is charmed by a loadstone. God made us to love; and when brought near to such an object our feelings entwine themselves around it, as the soft and pliant tendrils of the vine do around the support it clothes with leaves, and hangs with purple clusters. Such analogy is there between the laws of mind and matter!

Without detracting from Jonathan's merits, it must be owned, that however wonderful the love was which he bestowed on David, it was not bestowed on an un-

worthy object. One brave man loves another. In the old days of chivalry, men honoured courage in their enemies; loving and admiring bravery even when in arms against them. And that gallant man, who, leaving the camp alone, with no attendant but his armour-bearer, scaled the dizzy crag, and threw himself single-handed into the garrison of the Philistines, found an object worthy of his affection in the youth, who, armed only with a sling and stone, went forth to defy the giant. And when that shepherd lad stood before Saul with the grim, dripping head of Goliath in his hand, and with modesty, like a foil, setting off his merit, told the story of the fight, no wonder to me that it is said that the "soul of Jonathan was kind to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." They had much in common. In warlike achievements, in strong affections, in generosity of temper, in genuine piety, in courage that dared everything, and was daunted by nothing, these brothers in arms answered to each other as "face answereth in a glass to face;" and as I have seen two bright drops of quicksilver when brought to touch each other, run into one, so from that day forward, Jonathan and David were united.

We turn now from them to Jesus and ourselves; and what do we find in man to win the love of Calvary? The day that saw Jonathan's soul knit to David's, saw David in arms fighting Jonathan's battle, and saving his father's crown. We were in arms too, but they were turned against Christ's rights, and his Father's throne; we were fighting too, but it was on

the wrong side—rebels against God in the ranks of the devil. It is not enough to say that there was nothing lovely in us; that, as a holy God, God saw nothing in us to love. Sin, that abominable thing which he hates, the seed and germ of all evils, a thing so hateful that it is said, "he cannot look" on it, had so pervaded the nature of every individual man, and the whole race of men, that, it necessitated God to abhor his own creatures. Do not start at the expression. I use no language stronger than I can justify. Look at a corpse! putrid, bloated, infecting all the air; every feature of humanity shockingly defaced; the bright eye; the damask cheek; the sweet lips; the lovely form changed into vilest loathesomeness; a banquet to worms which, as they creep out and creep in, give a horrible life to death! Were the dearest, fondest object of our affections reduced to a state like that, how would we throw it, shuddering, from our embraces; regard it with the utmost horror; and turning away our eyes, call in pity for a grave to bury our dead. This may teach us how sin makes those whom God once loved with divine affection abhorrent in his sight. Nor any wonder that a God so holy, that "even the heavens are not clean in his sight," and that he "charges his angels with folly," should abhor man! Why, so soon as man sees himself aright, so soon as, with eyes illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he sees his own heart with all its corrupt passions, and his life with its many vile and hateful sins, he abhors himself. Does he not? Listen to one whose words will find an echo in every converted heart—"I have heard of thee

with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Historians relate how, with all her baseness, her duplicity, her cruelty, her bloody bigotry, the passions and crimes that have left an indelible stain on her memory, Queen Mary had much queenly grace. So perfect was her form, her face so beautiful, her smile so winning, that it was only men cast in the stern mould of Knox that could resist their witchery. And to advert to better attractions than the beauty which is consumed before the moth, I have seen some who, with not a little calculated to repel, possessed in moral and mental excellencies, some lovable compensating, and redeeming properties. But, in the sight of God's infinite and unspotted holiness, sin left us none. Nor was there anything at all but human misery to draw down divine mercy. Sin left nothing in man which it did not touch ; and, like blow-flies, whatever it touched, it tainted. The whole man was affected—head and heart, soul and body, the reason and affections, the imagination and the will. The deadly venom of the serpent's fang, like a subtile poison thrown into the circulation, was borne throughout all the frame. And hence the humbling, graphic words of the prophet, The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. If it be true of all mankind that they are altogether become filthy ; true that there is none that doeth good, no, not one ; true that "every imagination of man's heart is evil continually ;"

true that we may all adopt the words of the Apostle, and say, I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing,—then sin left us with nothing to engage, but everything to repel, the affections of a holy Saviour. Salvation, therefore, must be all grace; and a Saviour's love must have its meetest and majestic emblem in the sun of heaven. Sustained in the sky by no pillars that rest on earth, it hangs on nothing; and its bright beams, unlike the stone, the dropping rain, the blazing, dying meteor, that fall to the earth in virtue of its attraction, are sent forth by a power within itself. So with love divine; the healing beams of the Sun of righteousness. Salvation is all of mercy, and not at all of merit. "By his mercy he saves us;" and in embracing not the lovely but the loathsome, well may we transfer this eulogium to the love of Jesus, "thy love to me was wonderful!"

II. The love of Christ to us is wonderful, because there was nothing in us loving.

We love what loves us. Such is the law of our nature; and love comes in time to see its own face reflected in the heart of another, as in water at the bottom of a draw-well. We cannot resist loving what loves us; it matters not who or what it is; though but the dog that barks, and bounds, and wheels in joyous circles around us on our return—"the first to welcome and foremost to defend." I would hold his friendship cheap who did not love a dog that loved him; and care little for the child that would not drop some tears on the grave of his humble but faithful playmate—or

to borrow a figure from Bible story, of the "little ewe lamb which the poor man nourished, which ate of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was to him as a little daughter." Let a poor dumb creature love us, we are drawn to love *it* in return, by a law of nature as irresistible and divine as that which draws a stone to the ground, or makes the stream flow onward to the sea.

Whatever secrets this key unlocks; whatever strange and singular marriages it may explain, it does not open the mysteries of Calvary; it does not explain the love of Christ. I have, indeed, seen some that had abandoned themselves to a life of vice who still respected virtue, and looked back with remorseful regret to their days of childhood and the innocence of a father's home. I have seen a profligate son, who, though ringing a pious mother's heart, and bringing her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, yet love her; mourning his own failings he returned her affection; yielding to sin, still he clung to his mother as a drowning wretch to a piece of the wreck which he hopes may float him to the shore. Now, if our love of goodness had survived the loss of it; if we had retained any love to God after we had lost his image; if we had cast back some lingering looks on Eden; and, like Absalom, who felt pained at being two whole years in Jerusalem without being admitted into his father's presence, if we had been grieved at God's displeasure, then, with such goodly vestiges of primeval innocence, Christ's love to us would not have been so wonderful. But there were no such feelings in man to awaken the love of Christ.

Hateful, man is by nature hating. I appeal to the unconverted. Do not your hearts prove that? and how do those who have been converted, see it in the memory of those days on which they now look back with horror — wondering how, when they were in arms against God, trampling on his laws, despising his mercy, scorning his grace, he should have borne with them as he did. Then, how plainly is that written also in the Bible, in such sentences as these, The carnal mind is enmity against God;—Herein is love indeed, not that we loved God, but that he loved us;—God commendeth his love to us in that while we were sinners Christ died for us. And what is graven deep on our hearts, and written so legibly on the pages of the Bible, I see in still more affecting characters on the body of him who sits throned in heaven. More than wounded for our transgressions, he was wounded by the hands of the transgressors. The nail-prints on the hands that our Advocate holds up in prayer, and that deep scar on his side, were not the work of devils. To the question, What are these wounds in thine hands and thy side? how truly may he answer, These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends! Inflicted by the hands of men, the marks of a love that, throwing its arms around enemies, embraced the unloving as well as the unlovely, hatred as well as loathsomeness, let the shining throng that stand before him with crowns of glory, and in the white robes of victors, join the church on earth, and weave these words into the anthems of the skies, Thy love to us was wonderful!

III. This love is wonderful in its expression.

"Art thou in health my brother?" So Joab saluted Amasa, as he took him by the beard to kiss him; and the last word had not left his lips when he stabbed him to the heart. Smiting him under the fifth rib, he passed on. Not so the people that followed Joab to battle. As they came up, the sight arrested their steps; and they stood in gathering crowds — gazing with surprise and horror on Amasa as, victim of the basest cruelty, he wallowed in blood on the highway. Any dead body lying on the street would gather a crowd around it; and stay alike the steps of men on business, of the gay, of stooping age and tottering childhood. Exclamations of pity, of surprise, of horror, would burst from all lips; while the questions passed from person to person, How did it happen? Who is he? Where did he live? Who are his friends? And how would it move us, move the roughest men, to see some trembling, bent, grey old man, or a distracted mother, rush through the throng, and fling themselves on the body with a shriek, a wild, piercing cry, Oh my son! my beloved son! Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!

That stays the foot of man. But a sight is here that might have stayed an angel's wing; and filled both heaven and earth with wonder. Who is this? Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! By the cross where he dies, the ear of faith catches the voice of the eternal: "This is my beloved Son!" He there, who is buffeted by cruel hands, and meekly bears the blows; who faints from loss of blood and sinks beneath his

cross; who hangs upon the tree, while the blood streams from his hands and feet; whose dying ear is filled, not with holy prayers and psalms, but with the shouts and mockery of an impious crew; he, hanging mangled and lifeless on the middle cross, with head dropped on his breast, the pallor of death spread over his cheek, the seal of death on his lips, the film of death on his eyes, is the Son of God. The Prince of life has become the prey of death; at once its noblest victim and its almighty conqueror.

How did it happen? One word conveys the answer —that word is Love; love to sinners, to the greatest, guiltiest sinners. Love brought him from the skies; love shut him up in Mary's womb; love shut him up in Joseph's tomb; love wove the cords that bound his hands; love forged the nails that fastened him to the tree; love wept in his tears, breathed in his sighs, spake in his groans, flowed in his blood, and died upon his cross. It is impossible to think who he was, and we were, what and for whom he suffered; to stand beside that cross, with its noble, bleeding, dying, divine burden, and not address that dear, sacred body, saying, Thy love to me, to me a poor sinner, an ill-doing, and hell-deserving sinner, a guilty and graceless, a hateful and hating sinner, was wonderful—passing the love of women; passing the loves of angels; passing any tongue to tell; passing figures to illustrate or fancy to imagine, thought to measure or eternity itself to praise.

It was and it is still a common custom in the East for one man to express his friendship to another by

presenting him with rich and costly vestments—by taking his own robe and putting it on him. I saw it related how the present Emperor of France, having marked the dauntless bravery of a soldier in the very thick and whirlwind of the fight, took his own Cross of the Legion of Honour, and, in the enthusiasm of his admiration, fixed it on the brave man's breast. In harmony with such customs, the Scriptures tell us that Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him, and gave it to David, and "his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."

And when that shepherd lad, having doffed his homely attire, now stands before the court, and camp, and king, appareled as a prince, we have a faint image of what Jesus does for us. Son of God, he denuded himself of his visible glory, and, as it were, exchanged vestments with us. Taking not only our nature but our guilt upon him, he put on our shame, that he might apparel us in his glory. What an exchange! Our sins are imputed to him, while his righteousness is imputed to us; and thus, with a crown of thorns he purchases us an immortal crown, and ascends the cross, that we might ascend to the skies. Behold how he loved us!

In illustration also of the love of Jonathan, we are told that he said to David, "Whatsoever thy soul desireth I will do it for thee:" The very language which Jesus addressed to his people! He cannot withhold anything from those to whom he has given himself. How can he? It were unreasonable to believe it. If he never said to any of the sons of men, Seek ye my

face in vain, far less will he hold such language to those whom he purchased with his blood, and has enshrined in his heart of hearts. Nor has he promised what he wants either the will or the ability to do. Jonathan's was a large and loving-hearted promise, but alas! the day came when the heart that loved and the hand that would have helped David were cold in death. "Thy love to me *was* wonderful." Bitter thought! it was a thing in the past, a sacred memory: no more! The arrows of the Philistine had drunk up that love. The iron mace of war had shattered this sweet fountain. It lay empty and dry. The ear into which David once poured his sorrows was heavy in death. The heart that loved him had ceased to beat. Jonathan was gone—dead and gone; and all left was the memory of joys never, never to return. He should see his face no more: and so, he flung himself on his bloody grave, crying, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; the beauty of Israel is slain on his high places. Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women!"

How much happier the circumstances of a lover of Jesus! He is no broken cistern; but a fountain ever full and overflowing. His name is, "I am he that liveth and was dead." The angel guards an empty tomb; and dries up the women's tears, saying, He is not here; he is risen. From the Cross that held him, and the sepulchre that entombed him, we rise in imagination to follow his track along the starry skies, onwards to the gate of heaven; and still on, and still up, through lines of shouting angels, to the throne of the Eternal.

He is there now ; and changing the tense, as we behold him forgiving our daily sins, supplying our daily wants, pouring down daily blessings on our head, we say not, Thy love to me *was*, but thy love to me *is*, wonderful. And never till we ourselves have passed in at heaven's gate, and behold its lofty thrones and shining ones, the glory that Jesus has with the Father and shares with his brethren, never till the palm of victory is in our own hands, and a blood-bought crown is on our own heads, never till we walk the streets that are paved with gold, and join the songs that are as the voice of many waters, shall we sufficiently understand what we owe to the love of Christ ; how justly we may address to him these words, Thy love to me was wonderful.

The Example of Christ.

"Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."—Matt. iii. 15.

"Behold he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan." "If in the land of peace," it is elsewhere said, "wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" To the eye of the Jew, as these expressions shew, the Jordan seemed a noble and majestic river. They called it the river of God.

There is no river in the world we should like so well to see as this. It is not remarkable for its length. On the contrary, like a restless man who starts from the innocence of childhood, and pursuing a passionate, vicious, and turbulent career, soon ends it in perdition, Jordan, springing from the pure snows of Lebanon, after a brief, and boisterous, and rapid course, loses itself in a sea, emphatically called the "Dead,"—on whose shores no green thing grows; in whose briny waters no creature lives; and into whose bosom, appropriate type of hell, the stream is ever running in, and not a drop runs out.

Nor is the Jordan remarkable for the volume of its waters. At its highest flood, when, swollen by melted snows, it roars between bank and brae, it is

but a rivulet compared to the waters that, gather from many an inland sea, leap roaring over the cataract of Niagara; or those that, fed with Himalayan snows, and draining the very summits of our planet, roll their majestic volume onward to different and distant oceans. Still, notwithstanding that the Jordan, like Bethlehem Ephratah which was little among the cities of Judah, is little among the rivers of our earth, no river, neither the Tiber that washes the old walls of Rome, nor the Euphrates, that once rolled through Eden's garden, nor the Nile, which bore the infant Moses on its bosom and changed before his rod into blood, has a fame like Jordan's; or floats down the course of time the memory of so many glorious, marvellous, miraculous events.

Flowing through the grassy valley of the Cities of the Plain, it poured its hissing stream on Sodom's burning ruins. Then what a joyful sight was the distant gleam of its waters to a nation that had burst the bonds of slavery, and were drawing to a close their forty years' march to freedom! Like castaways, tossed for weeks on the open ocean, when they catch the first sight of land; like sinners, after a long, and dark, and weary struggle, when they obtain their first clear view of salvation through the blood of Christ, with what joyful shouts the Hebrews had hailed the Jordan as they saw it stretch its silver lining along the border of the promised land. Once on its banks, how many great events of their eventful history were associated with that river—cluster around its name! On these banks the march that began with a divided

sea, ends with a divided flood. Walled in by crystal waters, and stretching from the one to the other shore, the bed of the river is crowded with a host that pass dry-shod through, with trumpets sounding and banners flying—proving that though Aaron slept in his grave on Hor, and Moses in an unknown tomb, he was with them who never sleeps; whose "ear is never heavy that it cannot hear, nor his hand shortened that it cannot save."

Now Jordan grows familiar with miracles. Its rocks were the haunt of the ravens that left their callow brood to cater for a hungry prophet. Its waters felt the stroke of Elijah's mantle, and, reeling back, fled to leave a path for feet so soon to step into a fiery chariot, and be whirled away to heaven. Somewhere on its willowy banks the chariot descended that, greater than ever bore victor in his triumph or monarch to his throne, bore off to the skies this dauntless martyr and deathless man. And here, also, in that olden time, his steps directed by a captive child, came the Syrian with leprous skin as white as snow; and in these waters to which, type of those where souls are cleansed, God communicated a healing virtue, the leper bathed—rising from the seventh plunge with his flesh like a little child's.

Great and brilliant miracles as were these events, they pale their fires before that recorded in this chapter. We have seen the ark of gopher-wood holding the bed of Jordan dry, till the last of the Hebrews had stepped on Canaan's shore; we have seen the rough mantle of Elijah, both in his own hand and in

his servant's, cleave the parting flood; we have seen the raven's black wing as it sailed across it—the strange purveyor of God's faithful prophet; we have seen the Syrian bathe in its waves, and, cured of the incurable, leave his leprosy behind him; but Jordan's last, is its greatest celebrity. Here, in form not of dead wood but living flesh, is the true ark of God; the mantle that enrobed divinity; one to whom not ravens but angels ministered; he whose precious blood, as it streamed from many gaping wounds, and poured adown the cross, filled the fountain where, not leprosy, but something yet more fatal, sins are washed away. Unknown to the multitude with whom he mingles, Jesus stands on the brink of Jordan; and, certainly not least of all that river's wonders, he who baptizes his church with the Holy Ghost, solicits the baptism of its waters from a servant's hand.

When Jesus, girded with a towel, to perform the most menial office, knelt to wash Simon's feet, he shrunk from the honour, and remonstrated with his Master saying, Lord, thou shalt not wash my feet. Just so the Baptist, recognizing in this candidate for baptism, the Lamb, the Love, the Son of God, the Divine Master, to whom he felt himself unworthy do the meanest office, shrunk back; and venturing also to remonstrate, said, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? "Suffer it to be so now," said our Lord, "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." A sovereign's wishes have the authority of commands. John bows to Christ's word; they go down into the stream; and bending his blessed

head, Jesus has water poured on it by the hands of John. Wonderful humility! A wonder this that eclipses all the others. He was purer than the snows from which these waters flowed, yet, as if he was a sinner needing to be washed, he receives baptism by water at the hands of man; and that in the selfsame hour as he received the baptism of the spirit at the hands of God, when the snow-white dove, dropping from the skies, folded its wings, and rested on his head. Then, its waters not hastening away, but hastening to kiss its Creator's feet, and receive their consecration from the head they were poured on, we may apply to Jordan the words of the Psalm, "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee."

Such were the circumstances in which our Lord spoke the words of my text; and on it, as on a nail, let me hang some observations in illustration of the example which he sets us of piety toward God. I remark—

I. We see how faithfully Jesus observed the forms and duties of religion.

I have read of a distinguished general who conducted an army by forced marches, through a sterile as well as hostile country. They were footsore, worn, and weary; supplied with the scantiest fare, and toiling all day long, through heavy sands, and beneath a scorching sun. Yet his brave men pressed on—such as fell out of the line by day, unless shot down by the foe who crouched like tigers in every bush, and hung in clouds on their flanks and rear, rejoining their ranks

in the cool and darkness of the night. Thus this gallant army, undaunted and indomitable, accomplished a great achievement in arms. And how? They were inspired by their commander. Foregoing the privileges of his rank, he dismounted from his horse to put himself not only at the head of his men, but on a level with them. He shared their hard bed; he lived on their scanty rations; every foot they walked he walked; every foe they faced he faced; every hardship they endured he bore; and with cheek as brown, and limbs as weary, and couch as rude as theirs, he came down to their condition—touched by their infirmities, and teaching them by his example what part to act, and with what patience to endure. They would have followed him to the cannon's mouth—his cry not Forward but Follow.

Now, nothing invests the ordinary means of grace with such importance, as to see our Lord, like one of ourselves, observing them. He was independent of all means, and stood in no need of such aids. Yet, able to walk without these crutches, and rise without help from such wings, he stoops to our condition, that he may teach us by his own example the devout and diligent use of all the means of grace.

First, He prayed. How much of his time did prayer occupy; how little perhaps of ours?—The sun that left him on his knees, having gone round the world, returned to find him on the same spot, and engaged in the same employment. Jesus Christ, a whole night in prayer; alone on the mountain with God; what fact, what picture could so well illustrate the apostolic precept, Pray without ceasing!

Secondly, He punctually attended worship in the house of God. At those periods which may be said to correspond with our communion seasons, he repaired to Jerusalem—travelling for that purpose the breadth of the land; and though no priestly voices, as when the ark was brought up by David, raised the cry, "Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in," yet in him, disguised as a common worshipper, the temple received its God. A greater than the ark was there. Though often weary, like other artizans, with the toil of the week, he sought no excuse in bodily fatigue for staying at home on Sabbath; or for turning his back on the place of worship to breathe the fresh air of the country, or seek relaxation amid fragrant, flowery fields. With his little hand in Mary's, he accompanied her and Joseph to the synagogue of Nazareth; and the boy's sweet, gentle voice rose in the psalms of the sanctuary; and often, with his intelligent eye fixed on the speaker, he listened to grey old men as, ignorant of who sat there, they opened Isaiah, and preached about himself, and breathed out pious and patriotic wishes, that the long looked for Messiah, the hope of Israel, and Saviour thereof in a time of trouble, might soon appear. He who in early childhood was conducted with pious care to the synagogue, was often seen going there when a man; the widow and the mother leaning on his arm, whose kindness he repaid in his life, and remembered on his cross. On many a quiet Sabbath morning, when the plough rested in the furrow, and oxen free from the yoke, roamed the pastures, he might

be seen filling up the time with celestial talk, as he led the twelve through blushing vineyards and fields of golden corn, to the house of God. He was a living, walking, devout, divine illustration of the Apostle's precept—Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together.

Observe the lesson. The feet that carried Jesus to the church, trample in the dust the dreams, the proud and presumptuous notions, of such as affect a piety so lofty as to be above the need of means. How do the hills, on whose green sward he left the impress of his knees, teach us to pray, to be diligent in prayer; and the mountain cloud, and curtains of the night—his closet, how do they teach us to be mindful especially of secret prayer. It is then, as when lovers are alone, or the child lies on its father's bosom, or a daughter is folded in a mother's arms, that the heart is freest to pour forth its feelings; and sweetest, closest intimacy is enjoyed between the Bride and bridegroom, the saved and the Saviour, the penitent and his God.

The Bible says, Pray without ceasing—Neglect not the assembling of yourselves together—Do this in remembrance of me—Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature—Search the Scriptures. In all these duties Jesus leads the way. In that cottage, sitting by the window, when the day's work is done, with the evening sun streaming though the vine-leaves on its pages, see his head bent over an open Bible. He reads, and Mary listens. In that cottage, also, see him rise from his humble couch, and passing on to an inner room, shut the door on himself—he is

closeted, alone, with God. In these and other things, he fulfils all righteousness; teaching us, in the devout use of Bible, church, and closet, to follow his steps.

II. Let me exhort you to the diligent use of these means of grace.

I have no faith nor trust to put in any road to heaven other than that which our Saviour trod. Our Forerunner, he has left his foot-prints on the path of ordinances; and holding him to be our Pattern as well as our Propitiation, I will venture on no path but that he travelled. Can anything be plainer than this, that if our blessed Lord did not neglect the means of grace, much less should we, can we afford to do so? How far wrong, therefore, are those, belonging to the Society of Friends, or to sects which have sprung up in our own day, who, though in many respects exemplary Christians, affect a spirituality to which our Lord lent no sanction! Rashly disparaging, and dispensing with the use of appointed ordinances, they say that a Christian man should be above such beggarly elements and rudimentary things, cultivating nothing but a purely spiritual worship.

These good people seem to forget that we are not yet in heaven; nor are yet fit for it. We need all possible help to get there; and with the tide running strong the other way, require to put every oar in the water, and crowd all sail upon the mast. Dragged downward by the many and powerful attractions of this world, we can no more afford to dispense with means than a bird to dispense with wings. The Chris-

tian, spurning the earth, is to rise like a lark, singing and soaring in the skies; but mark how, while that bird sings, she beats the air with rapid pinions, and makes ceaseless efforts to ascend. Instead of treating the means of grace with neglect, had we been more devout and diligent in the use of them; had we risen as early to our prayers as men to their work—the peasant to the plough, the weaver to the loom, the smith to his glowing forge; had we been as prompt to improve Sabbaths, sacraments, prayer meetings, and holy seasons, as the merchant rising markets, to make money; the traveller gleams of fine weather, to push homeward; the seamen times of fair wind to shake out all his canvas—how much more Christlike had we been; how much better prepared for death; how much nearer heaven; how much more fit, and not only more fit for it, but fonder of it, and ready to say with Christ, I leave the world, and go to my Father!

III. Let me exhort you, thirdly, to a devout use of these means of grace.

I say, a devout as well as a diligent use of them. For true religion does not lie in these. If religion is not in the heart it is nowhere. He lies under the fatal error who is satisfied with himself, because, like a blind horse in a mill-course, he goes round, and round, and round the outer circle of religious duties. Unless these have the effect of humbling us before a holy God, and lay us like Mary at a Saviour's feet; unless we make just the same use of them as the Greeks sought to make of Philip, when they said, "Sir, we would see

Jesus ;" unless we rise from them as the people from the green grass mountain, where they were fed with bread from a Saviour's hand ; unless we leave our closets and close our Bibles with a deeper sense of sin, and a warmer love to Christ, and troubled hearts somewhat calmed, and burdened souls somewhat lightened : unless our morning devotions beget resolutions by God's help to fight the battle and bear the cross better to-day than yesterday, making each new day a new starting point and stage of the journey heavenward ; and unless we repair to our evening prayers, as a soiled and smoke-begrimmed workman to his evening bath, to wash away the stains and sins of the day in the blood of Jesus, we may as well go to bed and rise from it, prayerless as others—as the beasts that perish.

Trust not in mere outward duties ; the most scrupulous and punctual attention to them. How do the Jews warn and teach us to look above means to the God of means, and seek the grace of which these are but the pipes and channels. Who more strictly devout : scrupulously religious in a way ? For example, lest they should contract ceremonial defilement, they would touch no platter till they had washed it ; nor eat, though hungry as ravens, till they had washed their hands. So scrupulous were they in payment of tithes, that they tithed more than God ordered to be tithed : examples of men "religious over much," they not only paid dues on flocks and herds, and vineyards, and olive-yards, and corn-fields, but on common pot-herbs—anise, mint, and cummin. The disciples could

not pluck some ears of corn on their way to church to satisfy their hunger, and grind them in their hands, nor could our Lord himself impart visions to sightless eye-balls, but they must challenge these things as breaches of the holy Sabbath. Nor, though they scrupled not to murder "the Holy One and the Just," could they permit his poor, mangled body to hang after sun-down on the cross, lest the ceremonial law should suffer violence in its smallest letter. Yet what availed their sabbaths, and feasts, and tithes, and washings, and costly sepulchres raised to the memories of martyred prophets? These did not hinder them from crucifying the Lord of glory, nor save their temple from the Roman fire-brand, and Jerusalem from the Roman ploughshare. They had the form of godliness without its power.

Nor will the means of grace prove means to save or sanctify us unless they are used in another spirit than theirs. We are to use them diligently, but devoutly, in dependence on the grace of God; that bringing us into his presence and under his sanctifying power, we may be saved, not only from the punishment, but from the thraldom and love of sin. Means—the table of the Lord, the pulpit, the pages of the Bible, the family altar, the closet oratory, are of no value unless as putting us in communication with the Spirit of God; and used as the kite which the philosopher sends up to draw down the lightnings of the skies; or the bucket which the cottager sends down to draw up water from the well. Then, powerless as they are in themselves, they become the blessed and mighty instru

ments of spiritual good—the sails that catch the wind and impel the vessel on; the concave mirror that, placed before the Sun of Righteousness, gathers his beams into its burning focus to warm the coldest, and melt the hardest heart; eagle-wings to raise our souls to heaven; conduits, like the pipes that bring water to our city from these Pentland hills, to convey streams of grace, and peace, and purity from their fountain in heaven to their souls on earth. Blessings of the highest value as channels of the grace of God, let us use them not diligently only, but devoutly; in the spirit and after the example of him who, "in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears—and was heard in that he feared." As the great apostle says—Who is Paul and who is Apollos but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man. I have planted and Apollos watered: but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

IV. In setting Christ before you as your pattern as well as propitiation, I am not calling you to a hopeless task.

In looking at Jesus Christ, as he moves high and apart from all of us in his perfectly spotless life, one sometimes feels as we have felt when gazing on the bright but distant glory of a star that holds on its lofty course through the far realms of space. We wish to be like Christ; we long to be like Christ; but to reach his high, and holy, and pure, and spotless

character, seems to be like wishing to reach that orb so beautiful and bright and lovely, where haply sorrow never weeps, and sin has never entered. But to rise to his example, to attain to his holy and blameless life, ah! that seems as impossible as to climb the ethereal heights where that bright orb is shining, as it shone on Eden, and shall shine when the judgment of this world is come. We say, Who is sufficient for these things? The one seems at times as impracticable and impossible as the other.

Impossible? With God all things are possible. He has never promised that we shall reach the one; but his truth and his word are pledged for it that we shall attain to the other. He might again lower Jacob's ladder; or let down some other means of communication by which we could climb the skies, and rise to that lofty star, and, standing on its golden rim, might see ten thousand worlds, half the host of heaven, rolling beneath our feet. He has done a greater thing than this — letting down a ladder, for the humblest and weakest of us to climb, that we may not only rise to Christ's place, but attain to the perfection of his character. "When we see him, we shall be like him as he is."

Then we shall be like him; every saint in heaven a true, pure, polished mirror in which the king sees his own moral beauty. They shall be sanctified, and crowned, and throned like himself. And even now, how much more like him we might have been, had we only been more devout in spirit, and more diligent in the use of means. It is not by fits and starts that men be-

come holy. It is not occasional, but continuous, prolonged, and life-long efforts that are required; to be daily at it; always at it; resting but to renew the work; falling but to rise again. It is not by a few rough, spasmodic blows of the hammer, that a graceful statue is brought out of the marble block, but by the labour of continuous days, and many delicate touches of the sculptor's chisel. It is not a sudden gush of water, the roaring torrent of a summer flood, but a continuous flow, that wears the rock, and a constant dropping that hollows out the stone. It is not with a rush and a spring that we are to reach Christ's character, attain to perfect saintship; but step by step, foot by foot, hand over hand, we are slowly and often painfully to mount the ladder that rests on earth, and rises to heaven.

Reconciled and Saved.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."—ROMANS v. 10.

AMONG the ten thousand plants that clothe the naked world, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, or, as we would say, from the pine on the mountains to the lichen on the rock, none are found where the execution falls short of the design. Nor among the countless tribes of animals which people the regions of air, earth, and water, does God in any case appear to have begun a work and stopped in the middle—left it imperfect. He never made an unfinished flower, or an unfinished insect, and it were strange if he should make an unfinished saint; and that we should not be able to say of those whom he redeemed with the blood of his Son, what I can say of every primrose on the bank, and of every sea-shell on the shore—Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?

"Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" "I saw the prosperity of the wicked—there are no bands in their death; their strength is firm; they are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued as

other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about; their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish; they prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." These plaints and questions prove that the book of Providence is not so easily read as that of Nature; that its wisdom in design and perfection in execution are by no means as plain. Here God's way is often in the sea, his path in the mighty waters, and his footsteps are not known. But that is because the scheme of providence is not, like creation, a finished work. Take a man to a house when the architect is in the middle of his plan, and with walls half built, and arches half sprung, rooms without doors, and pillars without capitals, what appears perfect order to the architect who has the plan all in his eye, to the other will seem a scene of perfect confusion; and so stands man amid that vast scheme of providence which God began six thousand years ago, and may not finish for as many thousand years to come. Raised to the throne of Egypt, Joseph saw why God had permitted him to be cast into a pit, sold into slavery, and though innocent of any crime, committed to prison. And raised to heaven, looking back on God's dealings with him in this world, and seeing how there was not a turn in the road nor a crook in his lot but was good, how his trials turned out blessings, and that, while others lost by their gains, he gained by every loss, the saint, now that God's

works of providence stand before him in all their completeness, shall take his harp, and throwing his soul into the song, sing with the rest around the throne—Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways thou King of saints.

Now, God's work in grace forms no exception to his works in nature, and in providence. A man designs a great literary work, and he dies; or throwing it aside for something else, he leaves the world but a fragment of it. The studio of the painter has unfinished pictures; our streets have unfinished houses; and man has many a plan lodged in his busy brain that he never or but partly executes. But where God begins a good work he carries it on to the day of the Lord Jesus. He does not stop in the middle. No. Hell holds none that were ever converted; Christ plucks no brand from the burning to toss it back again into the fire; and though few may pass in at the strait gate, none that ever went in afterwards came out No, thank God! Salvation once begun, is not a thing of chance or fortune—there being undoubted security that, here, as elsewhere, God's work shall not come short of his gracious design. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; so much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

I. Consider our state by nature—we are the enemies of God.

Some things, such as the harmony between the di-

vine decrees and man's responsibility, such as three persons existing in one Godhead, we are to receive and to believe on the simple authority of God's word. There are other things, again, in which, "as face answereth to face in water," so the state of our hearts answereth to the statements of God's word; and such is the case with Paul's saying, The carnal mind is enmity against God. For was there ever a man who underwent a saving change that did not feel when he was converted that he was conquered, when he is sanctified that he is subdued? This enmity does not lie, as some fancy, in bad habits, education, or other such accidental and extraneous circumstances. It has its source in the mind itself. Regarded as a disease, it is not like a cold which any one may take, but a consumption, which is constitutional and hereditary: and what are all these sins and crimes which the apostle describes as works of the flesh, "adultery, fornication, uncleanliness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings, and such like," but, like the flushed cheek, the languid eye, and throbbing temples, and bounding pulse of fever, the symptoms of an enmity that lies lurking in every heart? The temptations and circumstances that call out the enmity in so many different ways, and to so many different degrees, no more create it than the showers and sunshine create the deadly hemlock which has its seed in the soil.

Nor is this all the truth. Consumption, fell and deadly as it is, usually threatens and attacks but one

organ. The constitution may be otherwise hale and sound. The best things, it may indeed be said, have their defects—there are spots in the sun for instance; there is more or less of alloy in all gold; and weeds spring up to deform the fairest gardens. But, as is proved, whenever circumstances occur to call it out, this enmity affects the whole man; so that he is as much under its influence as every sail, yard, mast and timber of a ship, are under the government of her helm. True, that does not always appear; but no more does the fire that sleeps in the cold flint, until there be a collision with steel; ah, see how it flashes out then—fire in every chip of the flint, in the whole texture and fabric of the stone. The carnal mind, according to Paul, not only *has*, but *is*, enmity against God. Enmity is of its very nature, as it is of the nature of grass to be green, or sugar to be sweet, or vinegar to be sour. If it were not so, man would not need to be born again, to get a new heart; like a watch that had but started a jewel, or lost the tooth of a wheel, it were enough to be repaired without being renewed.

What a plain and affecting proof of this have we in that history of our blessed Lord, which is not more a beautiful exhibition of love on God's part, than a hateful one of hatred on man's. Here is the thing; so put to the proof that there is no occasion for speculation; nor any room for dispute. Here is God incarnate; here is God in Christ; in the most favourable of all circumstances for man—God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, coming not to condemn the world, but that the world by him might be

saved. And did he find in men friends or foes? I once saw the poor, pale, cold corpse of a beautiful little girl taken out of the roaring flood in which her father —he was a drunkard—when drowning himself, drowned her; monster, and slave of vice, he was seen to raise his hand in the black swirling pool and lay it on her young head, pressing it down till he and she both sank together. But fancy a drowning man raising himself before he sank, and putting forth his dying strength to wound the hand stretched out to save him—to plunge a knife into the heart of a kind man who had periled his own life to save his. What hatred were that, which could prompt to so black a deed! Yet, when they dragged him to the rock of Nazareth to cast him over, when the kiss of Judas was on his cheek, when the cry of "crucify him" was in his ear, when the thorns pierced his brows, and the iron nailed him to the cross, did not God in Christ feel that he had come not to save his friends, but to save his enemies? I would hold any man my enemy that would kill my son; and if men by nature were not God's enemies, why did they kill his Son? why do they still reject him? The letters did not burn so bright on the plaster of Belshazzar's wall, nor does the sun shine brighter in the heavens than these words on the cross—he that runneth may read them—"Herein is love indeed, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation of our sins."

II. Consider the reconciliation.

The time has come when Jacob must face an angry

brother. He had taken cruel advantage of Esau's necessities, and still worse of his ungodliness, to possess himself of the birthright. There are men who will buy the widow's bible when the cries of hungry children tempt her to sell it; but Jacob did not sin against a hungry man merely,—the man was a hungry brother. I am at the point to die, cried Esau, and what profit shall this birthright be unto me? Besides most cruelly possessing himself of the birthright, Jacob most foully defrauded Esau of the blessing. He had settled the account with God, and was forgiven. He had to settle it with his brother now; and the prospect, as well it might, filled him with alarm. So when the messengers returned, saying, Thy brother cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him, it went like a knife to his heart. The shock threw him on his knees. God of my father Abraham, he cried, God of my father Isaac, deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him lest he will come and smite me; and the mother with the children. Busy, guilty, fancy conjures up a dreadful retribution—Esau's long pent up wrath breaking in a bloody tempest on his head. Already he hears the shouts of the assailants, and the groans of the wounded; sees his poor children lie bleeding at his feet, and Rachel in the grasp of a ruthless foe, stretching out her arms, and beseeching him to save her. What shall he do? Fight? It is vain to think of that. Esau's master in cunning, he is no match for the bold hunter in open battle. Flee? Encumbered with wives and little ones, he will rather die with than desert, it is vain to think of fleeing. One

refuge is still open to him!—our first, and last, and best resort. He betakes himself to prayer; wrestling with God till the break of day. I have seen the sun set on a troubled sea where the billows burst in white foam on rocky headlands, and roared in thunders on the beach; and to-morrow the same sun set on the same sea, smooth as a glassy mirror. A change as great, and in as short a time, has passed on the soul of Jacob. Yesternight was spent in an agony of prayer; and this night he lays his head in sweet peace on its pillow. He has been pressed to Esau's bosom; the long estranged brothers have looked each other in the face; have embraced; have kissed each other; and wept together; and buried in one grave Esau's wrongs and Jacob's crimes—being enemies they were reconciled.

Blessed change to Jacob; and yet but a faint image of our reconciliation to an offended God! What is that? what does it imply? what blessings does it bring? We shall never know them, never know them fully on this side the grave—till we get to heaven; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But this, meanwhile, we know, reconciliation is sin pardoned; death discrowned; peace of conscience; a sense of divine love; a sight of coming glory; the prospect when the ills of life are past and the storms of life are over, and the battle of life is fought, and the burdens of life are borne, and this body is mingling in the grave with kindred dust, that our spirits shall join the kindred spirits

of the skies, and be forever with the Lord. Ah, were we assured of our reconciliation to God, and did we estimate it aright, how often, like one who said to his physician when he told him that he would recover, Don't say it! or, like another who said when told that he was dying, It is the best news I have heard for a long time—would our longing souls spread out their wings to depart; how welcome the hour when death should sever the last tie that bound us to earth and kept us from heaven!

III. The means of reconciliation.

Suppose a man is lying under sentence of death! Shrinking from the gallows tree, he has sent off a petition for mercy; and waits the answer in anxious suspense. One day his ear catches rapid steps approaching his door—they stop there. The chain is dropped; the bolts are drawn; a messenger enters with his fate—on these lips, death or life. And the answer? Ah, the answer is that the sovereign pities the criminal, but cannot pardon the crime. The blood deserts his cheeks; his hopes dashed to the ground, he wrings his hands, and gives himself up for lost. And now the messenger draws near; and, laying his hand kindly on the poor felon's shoulder, tells him that there is one way by which he may yet be saved—if the king's son would change places with him, put these fetters of his on his own limbs and die in his room, that would satisfy justice, and set him free. Drowning men will catch at straws; not he at that. The king give up his son! the king's son, the prince royal, the heir of

the kingdom consent to die for a poor, obscure, guilty wretch like me, if there is no hope but that, there is no hope at all! Now fancy, if you can, his astonishment, sinking to incredulity, and then rising into a paroxysm of joy, when the messenger says, I am the king's son; it is my own wish, and my father's will, that I should die for you; for that purpose am I come, have I left the palace, and sought you in this dreary prison; take you the pardon, and give me the fetters. In me shall the crime be punished; in you shall the criminal be saved. Escape! Behold, I set before you an open door!

Such love never was shewn by man. No. But greater love has been shewn by God. He gave up his Son to death that we might not die but live; to be punished that we might be pardoned; to shed his blood that we might be cleansed from sin; to be buried, that we, buried and bound in the chains of death, might rise again. God laid on his own dear Son the iniquity of us all. When he hungered and thirsted, when the manger was his cradle and the cold ground his bed, when his heart was full of sorrow and his limbs were racked with pain, when his friends fled in terror and his Father hid his face, when his brow was crowned with thorns and his body nailed on the cross it was that we, being enemies, might be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Did David, when he stood beneath night's starry dome, and considered the heavens the work of God's fingers, the greatness of God, and the littleness of man, exclaim, What is man that thou art mindful of him? how much more may

God's people break out into expressions of adoring wonder, when they stand beneath a cross where, in its display of God's glory outshining all the stars, Jesus hangs—pouring out his soul to death ; a sacrifice for sin ; dying, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. No language appears to me so fitted to be a vehicle for the feelings that should rise in a believer's heart as he contemplates that amazing spectacle, as David's glorious outburst when summoning all things celestial and terrestrial to the choir—glorious angels with their harps, the seasons with their voices, woods and meadows with their songs, the skies with their thunders, and ocean with its many voiced waves ; leader of the song, he cries, Praise ye the Lord from the heavens : praise him in the heights : praise ye him, all his angels : praise ye him, sun and moon : praise him, all ye stars of light : fire and hail : snow and vapours ; stormy wind fulfilling his word ; kings of the earth and all people ; young men and maidens ; old men and children. Praise ye the Lord.

IV. Reconciled by the death of Christ, his people are saved by his life.

Suppose that our Lord, having satisfied divine justice and expired on the cross, had dissolved the union between the divine and human natures, and leaving in the grave a body which he needs no more, had returned to the bosom of his Father—still the Son of God, but no longer also the Son of Man, in these circumstances, his death had been in vain. There was the medicine, but where was the physician to administer it? there

was balm in Gilead, but no physician there. When we die our work is done. Not so with Jesus Christ. He had a great work to do after his death—a work foreshadowed on the great day of atonement in yonder ancient temple. The high priest, having sacrificed a lamb without spot or blemish, carries its blood in a golden bowl within the vail, into the Holy of Holies; offering it before the mercy-seat. By and bye, returning with the blood that he had offered, he takes a bunch of hyssop, and sprinkles it in red showers on the people. Now are they ceremonially clean before the Lord; and so David, with his eyes no doubt on better blood, prays, Sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow. Even so the great and true High Priest, Jesus, rises from yonder grave and ascends to yonder throne, that he may apply to his people the benefits of his redemption. He lives to provide for our wants on earth, and advocate our cause in heaven; so that our life is as much dependent on his as that of the branches on the tree, or the body's various members on the life of their heart and head. Because he liveth we live also—it being by a living Saviour that the salvation procured by his death is made ours, and applied to us in all its saving blessings. And if God, when we were enemies, was reconciled through the death of his Son, being reconciled, God and we now friends, how certain is our salvation! If a man under the influence of divine grace love his enemies well, how much better will he love his friends? Shew me a man so imbued with the spirit of Christ that he will even

risk his life to save an enemy, that is not the man to abandon his friends in their hour of need, when their back is at the wall. Lover of my soul, and Saviour of sinners, shall I believe less good of thee than of man? If thou didst love us so when we were thine enemies, how much more now when we are thy friends!

We attach little value to what costs us little; what is easily won is carelessly wasted. Of all men they are the most careful of their money, who have earned it by the hardest labour; of all churches and nations, as history shews, they guard their liberties with the most jealous care who have bought them at the greatest price; and of all the lambs in Jesse's flock, I have no doubt David loved that one best, and carried it most in his bosom, which he had risked his life to pluck from the lion's jaws, when, following the spoiler to the forest, he faced him, and turned him, and took him by beard and smote him. The great price at which Christ purchased his people is one great security for their safety. He paid too much for these jewels to let Satan steal them, or one of them be missing that day when he maketh up his jewels. If he came from heaven to die for you when you hated him, can he leave them to perish who now love him? No, never! The mountains shall depart, he says, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.

I hear that in the burst of joy which breaks out in heaven whenever a sinner is converted on earth. It

was when Goliath fell, his armour ringing on the ground, and David with foot on his mighty trunk, stood hacking at his giant neck, that shouts rose from the lines of Israel; and spectators on some neighbouring hill-top, of a conflict where our countrymen meet the foe in battle, we would pray while they fought; nor, till we heard the shout of victory rise from the field itself, above the roll of musketry and roar of cannon, and saw the foe waver and break and scatter before our brothers' arms, would we rise to take up the battle cheer, give thanks to God, and give way to a patriot's joy.

But when do the angels, who watch from the skies the events of earth, rejoice? They saw the Magdalene at Jesus' feet; and while she was weeping, they were rejoicing over her. They saw the thief turning to Jesus' cross; and while he was bleeding, they were rejoicing over him. It is not when this battle is fought out, but begun; when this race is closed, but entered on; it is at the birth of the new-born soul that there is joy in heaven—joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth, and as soon as he repenteth; because "whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified"—and all the devils of hell cannot break this linked and golden chain that binds the believer to the throne of God. "Whom he loveth he loveth to the end."

The Christian's Faith.

"O woman, great is thy faith."—Matt. xv. 28.

The Scriptures were not written either to amuse our fancy, or to gratify our curiosity. Hence they leave us unsatisfied in regard to many things and certain persons, we should like to be better informed about. Actors appear on the stage, play some striking part, and when our interest is awakened, the curtain suddenly drops; and we see them no more. True, we may meet again in the other country—the land that is afar off. There, seated in the blooming bowers of Paradise, with the sea of glass gleaming at our feet, we shall relate our own adventures to these saints, and hear theirs; how they fought; what trials they passed through; what dangers they escaped; all the providences they met with on their way to the promised land.

Who, for example, has not wished to know what became of the young ruler that sought our Lord, saying, Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? A more amiable, lovely, attractive character we hardly find in history; and our interest in him suggests the question, Did he perish? Perhaps he did,—a warning to us how near we may reach the kingdom of heaven,

and yet come short of it; how too great confidence may wreck souls as well as ships, even at the harbour's mouth. But Jesus loved him; and we would fain hope that as he followed his retreating steps with kindly eye, our Lord said within himself, "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." However, it is perhaps well that the last chapters of his history are wanting. These blank leaves are full of meaning; they seem written over with such warnings as these,—It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven—Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal —Love not the world, neither the things of the world, for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him—Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away—for the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof faileth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

It had been a much more unsatisfactory and serious matter, had the story of Joseph ended as abruptly. Take it as it stands, and there is no case on record more illustrative of a reigning providence. In its full details, in the unbroken story, we see all the links of the golden chain that binds our world to the skies;

like the distinct impression of a man's feet on the moist sea-sand, we can trace all the steps of providence along the whole course of Joseph's history from Jacob's tents to Pharaoh's palace. We see God's hand weaving the dreams of his sleep; and guiding him, boy, youth, and man, onwards through many vicissitudes of fortune to the day when they were all fulfilled. But what if our last sight of Joseph—his father's darling, man's faithful servant, and virtue's noblest hero, had been the prison scene? A story which is the delight of children, would then have been a riddle to the wisest men; and instead of forming one of the brightest examples of providence, it had remained one of its darkest mysteries, to perplex our minds and try our faith. Sold into slavery by envious brothers; wronged by the master whom he refused to wrong; a sufferer for conscience' sake; thrown into prison because he was a well-doer; how might sneering sceptics have looked into his history, as the vengeful woman did, perhaps, into his dungeon, to say, Joseph, where is now thy God? We thank God that his history was written out. Like the saints, he was humbled that he might be exalted. The steps of a dungeon became a ladder to the throne. And in raising him to Pharaoh's right hand, and making him the instrument of saving from famine the family of which the Messiah was to spring, the providence of God shines out from the clouds of his eventful life, clear as the sun from the shadow of a passing eclipse. Verily, "He is a God that judgeth in the earth."

We thank God also, and thank him even more, that

the story of the women of Canaan is written out. As it stands, it is one of the most encouraging passages in the Bible; had it broken off in the middle, it had been one of the most discouraging. There are no clouds and darkness around Jehovah's throne more impenetrable, or so dreadful, as had in that case hung over the character of Christ, and the cross of Calvary. Had the curtain fallen on the scene just where our Lord seems to lift his foot to spurn the poor suppliant away, replying to her cry, "Lord, help me!"—"It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs," the story, instead of a stepping-stone, had been a stumbling-block on our way to heaven. It is often difficult enough to persuade the desponding that there can be mercy for them; but with this history unfinished, it had been all but impossible. Faith would have staggered under the burden. It had hung like lead on the wings of prayer; and the doubting, timid, trembling spirit would have shrunk back, saying, Why should I go to Christ? I am unworthy; he shall say to me as to that woman, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs. Unless this incident had been told out to its happy close, where had been our answer, our unanswerable answer, to the despondency which says Christ may not, and to the despair which says Christ will not save me—this, namely, Show us in all his history an instance of his having refused the prayer of a penitent, or spurned the unworthiest away? As it stands, this story is one of the brightest beams of gospel light; as sweet a stream as any that flows from the "Rock of Ages cleft for me." Under

God, how much do we owe to the pen that wrote it? Ever blessed be the memory of the woman whose faith which I would use to illustrate the Christian's, rising to the occasion, replied, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table!"

I. Her earnestness is an example, as her success is an encouragement to us.

The time has arrived for Esther to apply the match, and explode the mine beneath Haman. Crying, O king, if it please the king, let my life be given to my petition, and my people to my request; for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish,—she reveals her own and her people's danger. Struck with astonishment, and fired with indignation, the king rises to demand, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? Pointing to her guest who turns pale at the charge, she says, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman! The king bursts from the chamber; and Haman, seeing by the glance of his angry eye that "evil is determined against him," seizes the moment to start to his feet, and beg his life of Esther. Knowing that its sands are run, unless he can mollify this stern beauty, he casts the ordinary manners and customs of a court to the winds; and throwing himself down on the couch beside her, implores her to save him. At this moment her husband returns. Goaded to madness at the sight, the cry bursts like thunder from his lips, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? It is enough. In an instant the mutes are at Haman's side; the muffle

is on his face; the bow-string is round his neck; it tightens; he sinks—and lies, as sinners seeking mercy never lay at the feet of Jesus, a corpse at Esther's feet. Bad as Haman was, the king wronged him; he put a false construction on the last scene. The imminence of the danger, the instinctive love of life, these made this wretched man earnest; and earnestness made him importunate; bold to familiarity, as a man would who was falling over some horrid crag, he clutched at the queen.

Earnestness is importunate; and I am afraid that we sometimes form too harsh a judgment of the poor mendicant who refuses to be denied—repelling him as impudent, who is only importunate. It was no want of respect, nor insolent contempt either of our position, or of our rights that made a man, on being refused charity, take rude possession of the door, and say, as he planted his foot on the threshold, Sir, I will not go away—I stay, or starve here till I am relieved. Roused by so bold a movement, we looked up to read the sad truth and reason in his face. A languid eye, and the deep hollow in his sallow cheek told at once that his was not the impudence of practised beggary, but the importunity of starvation. He was a stranger in a strange land; he had left his children moaning for bread, and their mother had none to give them.

And when the spirit pleads at the throne of God, when guilt, flying from justice, is knocking loud and long at the door of mercy, one not in earnest himself may wonder at the language which earnestness ventures to employ. Why should they wonder? Her

loyal subjects, standing at respectful distance, address their sovereign in respectful terms; using courtly language to a courtly ear. But let a royal cortege pass the procession that conducts a felon to the scaffold, as a drowning man who sees a plank float by grasps at life, he, bursting from his guards, springs to her side; clings to her robe, to cry, Oh, pardon, save me! and when to her order, Unhand me, let me pass—he answers, No; I will not let thee go—who so hard-hearted as to beat the wretch away; or so blind as not to see that this is not insolence, but earnestness?

Even so Jacob, in dread of Esau's vengeance, clung to God; and, wrought up to a state of intensest feeling, as if Jehovah had been in his hands, not he in Jehovah's, hung on him, saying, I will not let thee go unless thou bless me. How bold this language! And thus also the Psalmist addressed God in yet bolder language. No man more humble than David—no man ever laid a venerable head lower in the dust before the majesty of God, as he said, "I am a worm and no man;" yet see how this worm rises! In language which an angel never ventured on, because an angel never felt as he, hear how he speaks to God, "Why withdrawest thou thy hand? pluck it out of thy bosom. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise for our help? make haste, O God, to help me." And even so this Canaanite was importunate because she was earnest. If there be any boldness, any forwardness, any obtruding of her case on Jesus, it is to be imputed to this, that—a mother with a mother's heart—she had a daughter grievously vexed with a devil. Be followers of me,

she says. Let faith be earnest in prayer! The more the bow is bent, the higher the arrow flies.

II. Observe the trials to which Christ put his earnestness and faith. These were three.

1. His silence.

Men miss many opportunities of being saved—one at least every Sabbath. The castaways who have floated on wreck or raft to some lonely rock or desert island, miss none. Ever on the outlook, they no sooner descry a sail out at sea, than they kindle their signal fire and raise a flag of distress; rushing down to the beach, and uniting their voices, they raise one long, loud, piercing shout,—crying themselves hoarse against the hoarse murmurs of the deep. They let slip no opportunity of being taken off; and like them, not like many a sinner, so soon as this woman saw relief in Christ approaching the coast of Tyre and Sidon, she hastened to meet him. Not saying like us, It will do to-morrow, or next Sabbath, or some other day, or in another year, she seized the opportunity that might never return; and came to Jesus, crying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. In stories of the sea I have read how the castaways, seeing a ship in the offing made signals of distress; and in what agonies of suspense they watched her as she went about on this tack and then on that—hope rising as she approached, and sinking as she left the coast; and how when at length, not seeing or not heeding their signals, she sailed away from their lonely rock, they would throw

themselves down on the beach to weep out their anguish. So passed the Saviour by this woman. I know not that he so much as turned his head to look on her. If he did, as if he had shut up his compassions from her, as if he had no human sympathies, as if he was not bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, as if he had a heart of stone, as if a woman's prayer was not as powerful to stop this Sun of righteousness in his course as was Joshua's to stop the sun of heaven—Jesus went on his way; "he answered her not a word."

Now for the example of faith she sets! Mark that; nor be content to admire, but follow her. To rise from her knees disappointed, chagrined, deeply mortified; to complain, He might at least have pitied me,—a broken-hearted mother and her poor child were not unworthy of a kind word, and, if I was to be refused, of a refusal tenderly expressed; I am mistaken in him; he is not the man of God I took him for;—this, but for her faith and patience, is what she had done. But she was too bent on having her prayers answered; she had too much at stake; she believed too well of Christ to do so to be silenced by his silence. Teaching us what to believe concerning him, and continuing in prayer, and, knocking till the door is opened, how to make our hand heard on the gate of heaven above its harps and loudest songs, she perseveres. See, she rises, but it is to run after him; "faint, yet pursuing," to resume and repeat the cry, O Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on me; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

2. His apparent refusal.

No more than a drowning man who clings to a swimmer will this woman be shaken off. She hangs on his steps the most importunate of beggars. Would to God we were as much so!

Pursuing them with incessant cries of Son of David, have mercy on me: son of David have mercy on me: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil? she becomes an annoyance to his disciples. There is no talking or walking with any comfort for this woman; and for the same reason, I fancy, which often leads people to give charity, the disciples espoused her cause to get rid of her. Send her away, they said; relieve us of her presence; grant her what she asks, and be done with her, for "she crieth after us." Quick of hearing, as this falls on her ear, her hopes begin to rise. Paul rejoiced that others preached Christ, though from contention; and is she not pleased to have the disciples become her advocates, though from no friendly motives? Apparently moved by their solicitations, Jesus turns to look on her, and is about to speak. Her heart is ready to leap with joy. Alas! she is but lifted up, as is his antagonist by some strong wrestler, to suffer the heavier fall. He had answered her not a word, but now he speaks; and like the thunder-peal that bursts on the deep stillness which precedes the storm, his words are worse than his silence—falling on her hopes like lightning on a tree that, holding up its arms to heaven for dews and rains, gets fire and thunderbolts to blast them. Casting a glance on her, he said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of

Israel; and saying so, he passed on. She lies stunned by the sudden blow — poor mother, struck to the ground.

Shall she venture once more; or, abandoning sweet hope, yield herself up to despair, and leave her poor child to be forever possessed of this devil? It is difficult, under any circumstances, to quench hope in a mother's heart—it burns there long after it is extinguished in every other bosom; and where the welfare of a child is concerned, I have seen it cling like green ivy to the crumbling ruins of health or character. And nobly did this woman vindicate a mother's love; and by her faith put honour on the love of Jesus. Clinging with one hand to her daughter, see how she stretches the other out to Christ; by her attitude and action, saying, I know, and am as sure that you have not the heart to refuse, as that you have the power to help me! What an example of faith! What a lesson to continue in prayer, when in our own salvation or that of others, the object of our desires, and wishes, and supplications is certainly agreeable to the will of God; to pray without ceasing; "with faith, nothing wavering."

3. His apparent reproach of her.

"Is this Naomi?" cried the people of Bethlehem, when she who had gone forth with wealth, a husband and two gallant sons, came back, bent and grey, sad and sorrowful, attired in the threadbare garb of poverty and the weeds of a widow. Can it be? Is this Naomi? And we had not been greatly astonished if this poor woman, when these words, "It is not meet

to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs?" fell harshly on her ear, had, like one that has received an electric shock, sprung from the ground where she knelt, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, to cry, Is this — can this be Jesus Christ? Is that not to be doubted? — then, Have my ears deceived me? Poor mother! That was a strange blow from the hand which was to bleed on Calvary for the chief of sinners; and bind up the broken-hearted—not break the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax. In truth it was time for her to pray, Lord, help me!—high time, poor soul, for God to help thee. And he did it; and fulfilled to her, as he will to all who seek him in their hour of extremity, his promise, As thy day is, so shall thy strength be. If I, said one, saw Christ on the other bank, and between him and me a river of rolling fire, I would plunge in to reach him; and I, said another, would fling myself on Christ, though he stood with a drawn sword in his hand to receive me on its naked point. Such faith was this woman's—her confidence a perfect illustration of Job's grand, brave words. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. As the eagle, rising on the tempest that beats down birds of feeble wing, and sends them to roost in covert of bush and rock, flies highest in the storm, so did she. With holy skill as well as power, she seizes on our Lord's figure; and turning it to her own advantage, instantly replies, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table.

His purpose, which was a gracious one all along, is now gained. He had sought to draw her out; and

bring forth that latent faith, the language of which was music to his ear—gratifying the longings of his loving heart, and glorifying the power and grace of God. That purpose gained, he drops the mantle. And now he reveals himself to her, as he shall to all who will not let him go until he bless them—crowning her faith with the gracious answer, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Happy woman! many exclaim. I wish, they say, *my* faith were great—would not I give all the world to feel that I had a firm hold on Christ, and that my feet were standing on the Rock of Ages; with much coldness and deadness, with many cares, doubts, and fears, my faith, alas! is not great; there is nothing great belonging to me but my sins; they indeed are great; like mountains great, "my trespass has grown up unto the heavens." Well, who thus bemoans himself as Ezra or Ephraim did, is not singular. God only knows in any assembly of worshippers who is, or has been the chief of sinners. But the question, Lord, is it I? will not be left to the impure lips of harlots and publicans; since those who best know their own hearts, know much more ill of themselves than they can possibly do of others, will be the readiest to confess, Lord, it is I; and to regard themselves, not others, as the greatest wonder of saving grace.

When knees are feeble, and hands hang down, and a sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart, let God's people remember, that if their faith is not great while their sins are, there is another thing great besides.

The term *great* that describes our sins, still better describes our Saviour. He is greater to save than these are to condemn. What though, as Ezra says, our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown up unto the heavens,—in Jesus "mercy is great above the heavens." Finding it to be illimitable, infinite, rising far above the highest guilt, fancy flies back on happy wing, to use the language of an enrapt apostle; and seated on a branch of the tree of life, while angels stop their harps to listen, she sweetly sings of the height, and the depth, and the breadth, and the length of the love of God that passeth knowledge. The believer's hope does not rest in any degree on the greatness of his faith, but in the greatness of him who is its object. Therefore, let us bless God that, though our faith is deficient, our Saviour is all-sufficient, and that Jesus Christ made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption—we are complete in him. If we have not this woman's faith, thank God we have her Lord; if we have not the same voice to pray, thank God we have the same ear to pray to. Peter's safety on his return to the boat lay not in the hold he had of Christ, but in the hold Christ had of him; and though pale terror sat on his face, this poor half-drowned man was safer with Christ's arm around him than when, stout of heart and bold in step, he planted his foot on the swelling billows—the admiration and envy of his fellows.

O ye of little faith, be comforted! A little faith is a great power—equal to the task of casting a moun-

tain of sins into the sea of mercy; and a slight but true, is a saving faith. Immortal seed, it is the nature of faith not to die, but live; not to decline, but to grow. What though it be obscure and feeble? All hail to the smoke that curls up, presage of the blazing flame; to the feeblest dawn that glimmers in the east, forerunner of the coming day. "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The Christian's Faith.

"O woman, great is thy faith."—Matt. xv. 28.

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts," so says the Bible; and out of what story can there be extracted stronger drink or better wine, than that of the woman of Canaan? Nor is hers a singular case. Give us time, and from the Bible alone, I could gather of such cases a cluster, like that which the dusty spies brought from the land of Canaan, and the purple vineyards of Eshcol. A case that illustrates the freeness and the fulness of grace, this is but one star in a brilliant constellation.

To confine our attention to a single class of them, that of sainted women, look at our Lord's genealogy as given by the Evangelist Matthew! From Eve onward to Mary but four women are named whose blood flowed in Jesus' veins; and how curious, to say the least of it, that God puts into this honourable roll the very four that many, and certainly a Jew, cherishing the pride of ancestry, would have kept out—an incestuous person, a harlot, an adultress, and one of the cursed race of Moab. Had the list professed to be a catalogue of the mothers from whom Jesus

sprung, Truth, with her impartial pen, must have inserted, besides the name of Ruth, the names of Tamar and Rahab, and Bathsheba, blushing as she wrote them. But these are brought in apparently without occasion; for the list is that of our Lord's male, not female, ancestors. The family tree would have stood complete in all its branches without them. What explanation have we to offer of this? Why are the very women specially, and, indeed, only mentioned, whose antecedents were such as to reflect no honour, but in the world's judgment, rather discredit on the Saviour? This is what a hostile biographer would have done; and are we to account for it as for the appearance of tares among the wheat by saying, An enemy hath done this? Assuredly not. The record proceeds from the pen of a disciple, and was written by the penman as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

The truth is, that hope hangs nowhere more within the reach of sinners than on these branches that pride would lop off—there, the lowliest penitent, the vilest wretch who writhes like a crushed worm in the dust, may pluck the fruit of the tree of life. These names awanting, we should have wanted one of the most remarkable proofs that the honours of the heavenly kingdom are bestowed on the dishonourable; and that the graces of salvation, given without respect of persons or regard to merit, are free as the winds of heaven. To find Tamar, and Rahab, and Bathsheba in the same roll with such grand saints as Abraham, and Jacob, and the sweet singer of Israel, relieves our fears and

sustains our hopes. Some Sabbaths ago, on returning from church, I saw a little bird seated on a leafless spray of lilac ; and as he sat there with red throbbing breast, and his large, bright, golden eye turned on the setting sun, he sung most beautifully a carol of the spring ; and to my ear his notes fashioned themselves into the words of a song that celebrates the departure of gloomy winter, and how soft the "westlin breezes" blow. And to my fancy these women in the roll of the ancestry of the Saviour of the world, the Prince of life, and the Lord of glory, speak hope to us. Give them speech, and they say, If Jesus was not ashamed of us, neither will he be of you ; fear not ; he who was not ashamed to own us as his mothers, will not be ashamed to call you his sisters and his brethren.

Once on a time our Lord said, "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias ; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet ; and none of them was cleansed, save Naaman the Syrian." These words of grace had hardly left his lips, when the audience, starting to their feet, left their seats ; and, incensed, infuriated, made a rush at the pulpit. Plucking the speaker down, they dragged him forth ; cast him out of the synagogue ; and, pouring in angry tide along the streets, thrust him out of their city. For the mercy and grace indicated in that declaration, we welcome Jesus to our assemblies ; and, as the trumpets of salvation sound the King's advance, we throw the doors wide open—crying to them,

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in;" and crying to him, "Hosanna to the son of David, hosanna in the highest, blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Unless pardon is bestowed on the guiltiest, and honours crown the vilest head; unless men are chosen to eternal life, not out of regard to merit, but of the freest mercy; unless they that are far away are brought nigh by the blood of Christ; unless the dogs, so to speak, may not only crawl under the table, and eat the crusts and crumbs of the floor, but, transformed into men, may sit down and eat of the children's bread, what hope for us? "What dost thou here, Elijah?" Thanks to God for this blessed story! Woman of Canaan, bright star of the East, lead on! We follow thee, beautiful Exemplar of faith,—thy success assuring us that none come in vain to Jesus who go with thy earnest heart, thy frank confession, and thy touching plea, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. In further meditation on this case, consider,

I. Her humble confession.

I believe in the dignity of human nature. Like an old roofless temple, man is a grand and solemn ruin, on the front of which we can still trace the mutilated inscription of his original dedication to God. "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour;"—and there are points of view from which an angel of heaven may re-

gard us as occupying a position but a little lower than his own ; as the next link in the chain of creation ; as raised to a platform where our heads, are, at least, on a level with his feet. We enter the study of a Galileo or a Newton—to see, in such a philosopher, the dignity of human nature. Image of his Maker, he is holding converse with the heavens ; measuring the distance between star and star ; following the comet on its fiery track ; weighing not hills only, but worlds in scales, suns and planets in his balance. Leaving these scenes of calm and lofty thought, there, where man, subduing the elements to his will, binds fire and water to his wheels ; makes the forked lightning his messenger ; compels the stubborn earth to supply his table, and the worms to spin his dress ; and, spreading his sail to the wind, God-like, has his way on the sea, and his path in the mighty waters—again we see the dignity of human nature. Nor to feel our superiority, and justify such an expression as the "dignity of our nature," is it necessary to enter the quiet study of a Newton, or, amid the sounding anvils and roar of its machinery, the workshop of a Watt. We see it in that little child, that, at dewy eve, with sapling in her hand and her naked foot on the flowery sward, drives the cattle home, controlling the sulky leader of the herd with her infant voice, and turning him with a wave of her infant hand.

But, on turning the subject round, and looking at the moral aspects of man, alas for the dignity of human nature! A bright intellect and a dark heart; likeness to God in mind, and unlikeness to him in mor-

als ; the union in one creature of the intellect of an angel with the passions of a beast. Nature never gave birth to such a monster. This is the work of sin ; not of God. And we have only to look at our race, at ourselves, in this aspect, to subscribe to the Canaanite's confession ; or to justify the language of a man whose piety was as transcendant as his genius, and beside whom our giants are but dwarfs, who said,—I quote the words of David,—"I was as a beast before thee."

A beast! Of all the creatures which passed in long procession before Adam, take that which furnished our Lord with his figure of speech, and with whose habits we are so well acquainted. The dog is an animal which the Easterns hold in foul contempt,—Job saying, Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock ;—Hazael saying, What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? —Goliath saying, when the stripling advanced to meet him, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? Yet observe the dog! Look at him as he lies there, with wakeful eye, on guard over his master's property ; ready to spring at the robber's throat ; to die of hunger rather than desert his post and betray his trust. How faithful! The artist did him no more than justice who painted him as the emblem of fidelity ; but which of us has been as faithful to his God? Look at him again, there where he lies, when spring has melted the wreaths in the *corrie*, stretched out in death on his master's corpse ; "faithful unto death his last act was to lick the dead man's face ; his dying moans, that

sunk lower and lower as the frost congealed his blood and the snow drift gathered over them, saying, Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. Did our hearts ever glow with such love to Christ?—the dumb ass rebuked the prophet, but that poor, fond, dying dog rebukes us. Look again—see how he watches his master's eye; how happy a kind word, or even look makes him! with what bounding, noisy, overflowing joy he hails our return; dashing through the blithe group that crowds the doorway, no one's welcome is more hearty or more sincere. More faithful than we to Christ, he will not abandon his master: and, in that garden, where the disciples deserted Jesus and fled, he would have stood, and fought, and died at his feet. Look at him once more when his master dies! He lingers beside the coffin, or walks mournfully through the house, seeking one he cannot find; and when the family have returned from the churchyard, to part the dead man's estate, and, perhaps, quarrel over the spoil, he has stopped behind to howl over the lonely grave—saddest, truest mourner for the dead.

When I look at that, and, thinking of all that a loving God and a dying Saviour have done for us, contrast with such fidelity our disobedience, our coldness, our base ingratitude, our great unfaithfulness, I stand rebuked before this dumb, devoted creature. Who may not say with David, I was as a beast before thee?—or with Ezra, O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens?—or with Job, I abhor myself, and

repent in dust and ashes?—or with Jacob, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant?—or with Paul, I am less than the least of all saints?—or with this humble, blessed woman, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table?

II. Her thankfulness for the smallest mercy.

Objects seem large or little according to the medium through which they are viewed. In the microscope, what a remarkable change they undergo! The humble moss rises into a graceful tree; the beetle, armed for battle, flashes in golden or silver mail; a grain of sand swells into a mass of rock; and, on the other hand, a mountain, looked at through the wrong end of a telescope, sinks into a mole-hill, and the broad lake contracts into a tiny pool. Even so, according as we look at them, with the eyes of self-condemning humility, or of self-righteous pride, God's mercies seem great or little. For example, a minister of the gospel, passing one day near a cottage, was attracted to its door by the sound of a loud and earnest voice. It was a bare and lonely dwelling; the home of a man who was childless, old, and poor. Drawing near this mean and humble cabin, the stranger at length made out these words, "This, and Jesus Christ too! this, and Jesus Christ too!" as they were repeated over and over in tones of deep emotion; of wonder, gratitude, and praise. His curiosity was roused to see what that could be which called forth such fervent, overflowing

thanks. Stealing near, he looked in at the patched and broken window ; and there in the form of a grey, bent, worn-out son of toil, at a rude table, with hands raised to God, and his eyes fixed on some crusts of bread, and a cup of water, sat piety, peace, humility, contentment, exclaiming, "This, and Jesus Christ too!"

Such was the spirit of this woman's reply. It says —Lord! deserving nothing, I shall be thankful for anything ; to ask for myself, or poor child, such honours as the mother of Zebedee's children sought for her sons ; to minister, like these favoured women, to thy necessities, and with these hands to supply thy table, or spread thy couch ; to follow thee as thy shadow ; bending to unloose the latchet of thy shoes ; to kneel by thy side in prayer ; like Martha and Mary to receive thee beneath my roof ;—these are honours I ask not for ; I dare not aspire to. A poor Gentile, I seek nothing but the crumbs of thy table—among thy many and mighty miracles, in pity do some little thing for me ; it will cost you but a word, speak that word and my daughter shall be healed. Save her, good Lord ; I ask the least that I can do with. Let others sit at thy side, or lie in thy bosom, but grant my petition ; and, a happy mother, I shall be content to sit in the dust, and sing at thy blessed feet.

This woman is a model for Christian artists. What true grace and beauty in her humility! and who that has been brought to a just and deep sense of his sins, will refuse to be content, unless he is raised to heaven's highest throne, and wears its brightest crown? A drowning man, plucked from the jaws of death, is

happy with three feet of bare rock beneath him; happier than others with thousands of broad acres. The wrecked, borne shoreward in the life-boat that is making for the land through roaring seas and winter storms, are happier than Egypt's queen when the sun gleamed on her golden galley, and silken sails swelled in the summer breeze, and the world's great conqueror knelt, a suitor at her feet. And there is no humble Christian, no lover of Jesus, but is happier with the hope of heaven, with Christ in him "the hope of glory," than the men of the world when their corn and their wine do most abound; and all things go well with them. Though a beggar, the child of God parts not with that hope for all the wisdom and wealth of Solomon. To get within that blessed door; to have a place, not nearest the king, but on the outside of the circle around the throne; to bear the lowest title among heaven's nobles; to be the weakest child of God's family, the humblest servant in Christ's house, the dimmest, smallest jewel in his crown, the least, and less than the least, of all saints, is a hope that sets the heart a-singing—

> "Transported with the view I'm lost
> In wonder, love, and praise."

III. Her plea, she appeals to our Lord's generosity.

It is told in the life of a great criminal, who, though often apprehended and tried, was never convicted, that he made a rule of never answering any questions, nor admitting anything, and thereby, as many have

done, committing himself. While others, less cautious, paid the penalty of the law, he thus escaped the gallows; and died in his bed. One would think that sinners expect by not admitting their guilt to elude also the justice and the judgment of God. They do not admit that they are sinners; or if sinners, they do not admit that they are great sinners. On the contrary, like the Pharisee of old, they thank God that they are not as others are—not they! Guilt meets no pity at their hands; to save it, they would not touch it. "It is monstrous to be told"—wrote a lady of this school to the Countess of Huntingdon, when finding fault with George Whitefield's style of preaching—"it is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth; and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding; their doctrines are most repulsive, and strongly tinctured with disrespect toward their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks, and do away with all distinctions."

What darkness! Miserable, fatal ignorance! Who would not rather have their soul bound up in the same bundle with the poorest Magdalene, that stands weeping, trembling, timidly knocking at the gate of heaven, than with this haughty dame who, pushing the poor penitent aside, ruffles up to it—as if obsequious porters would throw it open at her appearance? How different the spirit of the Canaanite! This woman in that word "truth," as Mary did by the tears that washed the dust from Jesus' feet, puts in a plea of guilty; un-

clean; unworthy. Catching at the word and figure which our Lord uses, and casting herself on his generosity, she says, Yet surely you will treat me as kindly as a man treats his dog. Blessed humility! happy thought! touching, irresistible appeal!

Now, her plea is as good as ever. We have no other; and, thank God, we need no other. By the voice of our conscience or of his word, does God say, You have been a sinner! We reply, Truth, Lord.—There is no commandment of mine you have not broken, nor mercy of mine you have not abused! Truth, Lord.—You have crucified my Son! Truth, Lord.—You have grieved my Spirit! Truth, Lord.—You deserve to be cast into hell! Truth, Lord.—Into the deepest, hottest hell! Truth, Lord. It is all true; but, God of mercy! so is this, that thou never saidst to any of the sons of men, Seek ye my face in vain; that thou art not willing that any man should perish; that thou hast no pleasure in the death of the wicked; that thou didst send thy Son to seek and to save the lost; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. The woman was successful, why should not we? We will hope in thy mercy, for is it not written, The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy?

The woman's plea good as ever? It is better than ever. We can go with more freeness and boldness than she to the throne of grace. "Dog," that harsh sounding word, is blotted from the Bible. Since Jesus died, the differences between Jew and Gentile abolished, his lips have never said "dog." Sent to save in

his own day only the lost sheep of the house of Israel, with Jews for the objects of his mercy, and the Holy Land for the orbit of his mission, here our Lord in a sense, exceeded his commission. To save this poor, struggling, sinking creature, he overleaped the barriers of ancient covenants; and taking time by the forelock, anticipated the hour when there should be neither Jew nor Greek, nor bond nor free. How great the Canaanite's happiness had been if, in reply to disciples, who said, Send her away, he had answered, No, I will not send her away; why should I? it is to her, and to such as her, that I am sent. At such words how had the blood rushed to her palid cheek; how had her heart palpitated with joy; throwing herself at Jesus' feet, as she clasped and kissed them, now confident of getting all she asked, how had she mingled praises with her prayers! But what in that case had been her position, is ours now. We have not to pursue a departing Saviour; nor has our distress to address itself to an ear that seems deaf to pity. Jesus is passing; but not now silent, reserved, and wrapt in thought of other objects than us. No. He stops; he looks kindly on us; he pities us; he loves us; and, opening his arms he invites us to his bosom. Throned on the mercy-seat, with all power given him in earth and heaven, see how he stretches out the golden sceptre, saying to every suppliant, What is thy request, and what is thy petition, and it shall be granted thee?

The Christian's Prayers.

"They continued steadfastly . . . . in prayers."—Acts ii. 42.

The water is purest at its fountain among the mountains, where it gushes cold from the rock, or bubbles up at the mossy spring; the nearer to the source the clearer is the stream. By every mile it rolls, it grows in volume; till the streamlet which a child could leap, fed by many tributaries, has swollen into a broad river, on whose bosom, as it nears the sea, fishermen shoot their nets, and the ships of nations ride. But what the water has acquired in depth and breadth, it has lost in purity; growing the muddier, the further it goes. How like to what happens in Churches;—which as they become larger, usually become more loose in doctrine and more lax in discipline. With an increase of numbers, they often present such an increase of corruptions, that to find the purest days of many a sect, we must turn our steps backward to the period of its rise.

In some respects this is true even of the Christian Church. When young in years and small in numbers, and poor in point of wealth, what love, unity, purity, and peace, dwelt within her walls! Since then how have these walls been shaken by the violence, and filled

with the din of controversies! Here one sect carrying on fierce war against another; and there intestine wars —two parties contending within the same body, and more like wolves than sheep, worrying, "biting, and devouring" one another. Suppose an inhabitant of another sphere to alight on this one! He sees the Church of Christ rent into jealous, envious, angry, hostile factions; and finds them, instead of presenting one bold front to the common enemy, burying their swords in each other's bosoms. How difficult it were for him to believe that they were subjects of one King; had a common faith, a common cross, a common Bible, a common hope, a common heaven; and that the choicest title of their Sovereign was not the god of war, but the Prince of Peace. Once the heathens said, See how these Christians love one another! They say it no more. And we cannot contrast what the Church is now, and has been for bygone ages, with the purity and peace of her early days, without being ready to cry, How are the mighty fallen; the weapons of war how are they perished!—How is the gold become dim, how is the most fine cold changed!

What a picture of Christian unity, love, self-denial, mutual affection, devotedness to each other's welfare, and to the great interests of Messiah's kingdom, is offered to our admiration in the verses that follow the text—in that community of goods which sanguine politicians have often dreamed of, but Christians only have ever attained to! In those days the Church of Christ was like one large, loving family, to whose common treasury each member brought his wealth and wages.

Nobody was immensely rich ; and none were miserably poor. Riches and rags, splendour and squalidness, did not stand in incongruous conjunction ; and worship, as I have seen them, under the same roof, or sit side by side at the same communion-table. As all the rivers of the earth pour their waters into one sea, and all the roots of a tree convey their nourishment to one stem, and all the veins of the body empty themselves into one heart, from which the tide of blood, borne along the bounding arteries, is sent forth again to be distributed to every member according to its needs—so was it in primitive times with the wealth of those who constituted the Church, the body of Christ. What states have been in name, it was in fact—a commonwealth ; and the only one the world ever saw. The people lived for Christ ; regarding their possessions as his, not their own. They judged that as a man who buys land, buys all belonging to it—the trees that grow on its surface, and the minerals that lie in its bowels—so, when Christ bought them with his blood, with them he bought all that was theirs. They felt that if Christ gave his life for the poorest saints, they could not do less than share their "means and substance" with them ; and so, as we are told—They who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

There was no command laid on them to do so ; nor does any command lie on us to imitate their example in this matter. Such a practice would now be as undesirable, as it is impracticable. Still, though their

circumstances were so peculiar as to lead them to adopt a peculiar line of conduct, how ought their conduct—the spirit of their example, and, to adduce a still higher authority, how ought the example of Christ, who, with his disciples, had a common purse, to call forth our charity to God's poor saints; teaching us to fill their scanty cups with the overflowings of our own.

There is, however, one marked feature of that early Church recorded in these verses, which we may safely copy, and are indeed called to copy. In their steadfastness in prayer, they set us an example that we should follow their steps. Who does not know that to grow the same fruit as others—crops as fine in quality and abundant in quantity, we must apply the same culture to ground or tree? I have seen, for example, two plants growing under the glass of the same conservatory; and while the one showed a mass of flowers that dazzled the eye with their beauty, and filled the whole house with their perfume, the others, fruitless and flowerless, hung its drooping leaves, and seemed pining to death, under a deep decline. Both stood in the same soil; enjoyed an equal temperature; and had been taken from one, common parent stem. Whence the difference? The cause of that was neither obscure nor remote—this had been often, but that, neglected, had been seldom watered. Now, what water is to thirsty plants, prayer is to the graces of a man, or a Church. Do we admire, wonder, and sometimes indeed, stand astonished at the love which animated and the fruitfulness which dis-

tinguished these first Christians? The riddle is read, the mystery solved, in these words, "They continued steadfast in prayers."

I. Their employment—prayer.

A refuge in trouble, our strength in weakness, our armour in battle, our comfort in sorrow, the wings by which we rise to God, a ladder for our feet in climbing the skies, prayer is the first sign of conversion. It is the birth-cry of a soul—like that cry in the natal chamber, by which the mother knows her new-born child is alive. The penitent thief was converted on the cross; and the first intimation the world had that he who but an hour ago was mocking our dying Lord had become another man, was to see him turning round on the nails to cry, Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom. The jailer, nor he the only man born again in such a place—was converted in the prison; and the first intimation Paul and Silas had of his change was when he cast away the sword, and, calling for a light, sprang into the dungeon, to fall on his knees, and cry, Sirs, what shall I do to be saved? Paul himself, like a vagrant's child, was born on the public road, struck down, converted on his way to Damascus; and the change was announced to Ananias in these words, Behold, he prayeth. Prayeth! and it is of such prayers I speak, of true prayers—not those of the lip, but of the heart; for no arrows reach yonder sky but those that are shot from heart-strings, when the soul is strongly bent like an elastic bow. A man may say his prayers—say them

from lisping infancy to toothless, mumbling age, from his cradle to his coffin, yet never once have prayed.

The first, true sign of spiritual life, prayer is also the means of maintaining it. Man can as well live physically without breathing, as spiritually without praying. There is a class of animals—the cetaceous, neither fish nor sea-fowl, that inhabit the deep. It is their home; they never leave it for the shore; yet, though swimming beneath its waves and sounding its darkest depths, they have ever and anon to rise to the surface that they may breathe the air. Without that these monarchs of the deep could not exist in the dense element in which they live, and move, and have their being. And something like what is imposed on them by a physical necessity, the Christian has to do by a spiritual one. It is by ever and anon ascending up to God, by rising through prayer into a loftier, purer region for supplies of divine grace, that he maintains his spiritual life. Prevent these animals from rising to the surface, and they die for want of breath; prevent him from rising to God, and he dies for want of prayer. "Give me children," cried Rachel, "or else I die;" Let me breathe, said a man gasping, or else I die; Let me pray, says the Christian, or else I die?

"Now," writes Paul, "abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity;" and the fair crown he puts on charity, we may place on the bended head of prayer. Among all the means of grace—sermons, sacraments, Sabbaths, providences, God's word, either read or preached—the greatest in some re-

spects is prayer. Nor men nor devils can shut its gates. When every other avenue to God is closed, these stand open—day and night continually. The storm of persecution may drive us from the house of God; the voice of preachers may be silenced in prisons; the Church may excommunicate and debar us from the communion table; the Bible plucked from our hands, may be burned to ashes in Popish flames; all this has happened, and may happen again. These are avenues which man may close; not this, the door of prayer. The martyr found it standing open in his dungeon; Daniel in the den of lions; the three children in the fiery furnace; Jonah in the belly of the whale; Paul and Silas in the prison, where their feet were in the stocks, but their spirits were free; and when his brow is clammy cold, and his eyes are glazed and dim, and his ear has lost its hearing, and his tongue its powers of speech, the moving lips, and uplifted hands tell the by-standers at a Christian's deathbed that the gates of prayer stand open. Prayer and a good man part only at the door of heaven; there being a breath, a groan, a sigh, between earth's prayers and its eternal praise. He rises from the footstool of mercy to receive the crown, and ascend a throne.

II. Their perseverance in this exercise—they continued steadfastly in prayers.

Prayers which are not answered at once, nor, perhaps, for a long time afterwards, may nevertheless be accepted. Were he to speak, Christ's reply to a mother, earnest and urgent for a son's conversion, might be

such as he gave his own mother at the marriage in Cana, Woman, mine hour is not yet come. Now, God's people are apt to forget this; and that it is with prayer, to borrow an illustration from commercial transactions, as with a bill, which, though accepted, is often not paid till months or years elapse. Our heavenly Father knows best what to give; and also how, and where, and when to give. Were its answer always to follow prayer, as the peal roars upon the flash, I suspect that we would be as ready in spiritual as we are in earthly matters to look only to secondary causes, and forget God's hand—coming to look on our prayers as being the cause of the answer, as much as we are in the habit of regarding the flash of lightning, without any reference to God, as the cause of the peal of thunder.

Besides, if the answer were always to follow on the prayer, the grand ends of God's providence would often be defeated. Let me illustrate this by the case of the prodigal. It so happened that this profligate youth was deeply impressed with a sense of bad, unfilial conduct. How touchingly is that brought out in this soliloquy, "I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." But suppose it had been otherwise, and that by report, or by his bold bearing and sullen look, his father knew it to be otherwise, would he have run to meet him? Would he have kissed his cheek? Would he, anticipating his wishes, have granted forgiveness before it was asked?

Would he, in the fulness of a father's joy, the gush of long pent up feelings, as counting nothing too good for him, have cried for the fairest robe ; bidden music wake up, and wine flow, and floors shake to the dancers' feet ? Would he, taking him to his bosom and restoring him to the place of a son both in his heart and home, have done exceeding abundantly above all that he could ask or think ? Certainly not. If the prodigal, though somewhat, had not been fully, sensible of his sin, the father would have pursued a different course. God cures souls as we cure bodies, and often wounds to heal. And, in the case supposed, this father, in whose portrait Jesus drew an attractive picture of his own, would have turned his back on his son at the very time his heart was turning to him. Restraining feelings that struggled to get forth, he would have received him coldly, that he might humble his pride, and fit him to receive future favours. See how David dealt with Absalom ! To say nothing of those that heard it, who ever read that doleful cry, " O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son," without feeling that David was as tender in heart, as he was true to friendship, and brave in battle, and pious toward God. Yet when his heart was breaking for the love of his first-born, see how he allowed him to stay for two whole years in Jerusalem—sternly refusing to see his face. Or look at Joseph's conduct to his brethren ! He yearned to make himself known to them ; and had forgiven all their crimes so soon as he saw their faces. Yet he dealt harshly with them ; spoke

roughly to them; called them spies; cast them into prison. Nor till conscience, long asleep, but now woke by this rough hand, reproached them and taught them to reproach themselves, saying, We are very guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us—not till then did he drop the mask, and cry with a look that proclaimed their pardon, I am Joseph! Even so, to deepen the humility of those that seek him, to try their patience, to quicken their patience, to call forth their faith, to fire their ardour, and blow the smoking flax into a burning flame, Jesus, when his heart is overflowing with tenderness, may for a while refuse prayer her answer—hide himself, nor say, I am Jesus.

And when we pray, but receive no answer, and putting our ear to the door, where we have been knocking, as if the house were untenanted, we catch no approaching footstep, nor sound, nor sign of any one being within, what are we to do? To cease praying? Cease praying! By no means. No more than I would cease swimming for dear life when the cruel wave had plucked my hands from the rock, or, after my feet had touched the blessed sands, bore me back again and out to sea. I am to knock and listen; to stand and wait; and, importunate as the widow, take no rest and give God none, till the door is opened. Do this for what his word teaches you is agreeable to his will, and if the answer does not come when you are living, you shall get it when you are dead. In prayers, or curses, men sow what afterwards grow above their graves.

It is eighteen hundred years since Jesus prayed, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; and that prayer is answered in every chamber from which a dying saint takes his flight to glory. It is eighteen hundred years since they cried, His blood be on us and on our children; and God is answering that curse now in a people scattered, and peeled; a hissing; a byword; and a proverb in all the earth.

Let faith and hope hold up the arms of prayer, till, paralyzed by death, they drop powerless at your side. Many a pious parent has wrestled with God for an ungodly son; nor got his answer until he had left the earth and been years in heaven. One day its door is thrown open. He looks round to see who comes in—there is his son! The father leaves his throne to rush into his arms; they embrace; and Jesus, seeing of the travail of his soul, and rejoicing over this trophy of his cross, hears in heaven that outburst of paternal joy, "My son that was dead is alive again, that was lost is found."

III. The fruit of prayer.

The preacher stands up before his audience to proclaim salvation, and offer pardon to the guilty—to the guiltiest, by the blood of Jesus. By all that is sacred and holy, by all that is tender and terrible, by love to God and regard to themselves, he urges on them its cordial and immediate acceptance. Yet how often do the vacant eyes, and unmoved demeanour of hearers—so unlike persons under sentence of death getting tidings of a pardon—remind him of the question, Shall

horses run upon the rock, shall a man plough there with oxen? A very profitless field! Time, besides shedding snows on our head, draws furrows on our brow; but it is not over bald mountain brows that the husbandman guides his plough. Cultivating the soil of the valley, he leaves the rocky summits to the eagle, to mists and clouds and roaring tempests.

Bolder than he, the preacher of the gospel casts the seed of the word on stony hearts. Why not? Has not God encouraged him; saying, Is not my word a fire and hammer to break the stone in pieces? Yet, alas! how often does the result of his most solemn, most startling, most searching appeals but shew that he has run his horse on a rock, and ploughed there with oxen!—the only feeling elicited, temporary—like the the spark which the horse's hoof strikes from the rock; dying the instant of its birth.

It is one thing, however, to address our speech to men, and another and much more hopeful thing to speak to God. In other words, it is one thing to preach, and an entirely different thing to pray. For who prays, never runs his horses on a rock, nor ploughs there with oxen. When the season has been cold and backward, when rains fell and prices rose, and farmers desponded and the poor despaired, I have heard old people, whose hopes, resting on God's promise, did not rise and fall with the barometer, nor shift with shifting winds, say, We shall have harvest after all; and this you can safely say of the labours and fruits of prayer. The answer may be long in coming—years may elapse before the bread we have cast on the waters

comes back; but if the vision tarry, wait for it! Why not? We know that some seeds spring so soon almost as they are committed to the ground; but others lie buried for months; nor, in some cases, it is till years elapse that they germinate and rise, to teach us that what is dormant is not dead. Such it may be with prayer. Ere that immortal seed has sprung, the hand that planted it may be mouldering in the dust—the seal of death on the lips that prayed. But though you are not spared to reap the harvest, your prayers are not lost. They bide their time, God's "set time." For in one form or another, in this world or in the next, who sows in tears shall reap in joy. The God who puts his people's tears into his bottle, will certainly never forget their prayers.

Consider what honour has God put on prayer! The question is not, What can it do? but, What has it not done? Has it not divided the sea; quenched the violence of fire; shut the mouths of lions; and opened the gates of Paradise? As your finger would do to that clock, did it touch the pendulum, prayer has gone up to heaven and stopped the sun. It has gone down into the tomb, and brought up the dead. It has bound up the clouds; and loosed them again. See the prophet's servant yonder, looking seaward, on the top of Carmel. He descries a speck like a white sail on the rim of the deep. It rises; no bigger at first than a man's hand, it grows, gathers, spreads, till it covers the whole dark vault of heaven; and now, with thunders roaring, lightning flashing, rain pouring from the skies, and foaming cascades leaping down the hills, the

king lashes on his startled horses—flying before the tempest. Who or what wrought this welcome, sudden change? The prayers of that man who, with shaggy robe and girt-up loins, runs by the chariot, did it—shattered with thunder-bolts the bottles of the sky. "Elias," says the apostle, "was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Are we to expect such answers now? Well, we err more, perhaps, by expecting them too little than too much. When the State or Church appoints days of prayer for rain in dry, or for drought in wet seasons, how few go to church with the faith of that child who was observed going there prepared for rain. Though there was no cloud in the heaven, God was there; and would to God we prayed with more of the faith that replied to those that taunted her, and expressed surprise to see her prepared for a change of weather: "We are going to pray for rain, and I expect God will hear us, and send it." Certain it is that if we expected more, we should get more. Who honours God with their faith, he will honour with his favours; and this is especially true of prayers that, seeking better harvests than sickles reap, plead such promises as these, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water-

courses." Prayer is the key that unlocks the door of heaven—it is opened by men on their knees.

The Spirit yields to prayer. Look at our Lord's baptism. Side by side John and he stand in Jordan's stream. He who afterwards bowed his head to death, now bows it to a servant's hand. Baptised by John—the greater by the less—he leaves the water; and it is when on the bank, where, Luke tells us, he engaged in prayer, that the eyes of the spectators catch a dove-like object, dropping with expanded wings till it rests upon his head; praying, he receives the Spirit. And how were the disciples engaged at Pentecost? That day of days found them all in one place; and in prayer. Suddenly, though no breath stirred the leaves of the aspen, or bent the reeds that stood in the shallows of the sleeping lake, there came a sound, as when the wind roars through the winter forests. Every man has started and raised his head in sudden alarm to cry, What is that? but is struck dumb; on every head is a tongue of fire—sign of the Spirit's presence, and the power of prayer. Once more the disciples are met—met like a crew on deck when their vessel, at the mercy of the storm, is driving on the reef. The church is in imminent danger. The preaching of the gospel is forbidden. Hanging over destruction, his people cry to the Lord. The kings of the earth have set themselves, and the rulers taken counsel together against the Lord and his anointed; but he that sits in heaven laughs, the Lord has them in derision. Suddenly when the Church in her distress is casting herself on God, for there is no help for her in man, the

house where she is met is struck as by a reeling earthquake—feels such shock as when a ship takes the sand. It rocks to its foundations ; and now they who feared that they and the hopes of a lost world were to be buried in a common ruin, find themselves filled with the Holy Ghost. Who would be so filled, or would have others filled, let him pray. "To your tents, O Israel!" was an old cry ; now, whether they seek their own or others' salvation, let it be, To your knees, O men! The Spirit comes to the call of prayer.

Now is the time for it—the day ; the hour. There is nothing too great you may not get in this world for asking ; nor anything too little you shall not be refused in the next. Here, God gives pardon to the greatest sins, his saving mercy to the greatest sinners ; but there, the man that now rejects the cross of Christ and the crown of glory, shall lift up his eyes in torment—nor get a drop of water to cool his tongue. Seek the Lord, therefore, while he is to be found ; and continue steadfastly in prayer.

The Christian's Growth.

"We beseech you brethren, that ye increase more and more."—1 Thess. iv. 10.

Creation, so far at least as concerns this world, has been compared to a pyramid. Beginning with the mineral, passing upward into the vegetable, and rising into the animal kingdom, we find man standing on the apex—the crowning work of God. In defining the limits of these kingdoms, Linnæus, the father of botany, says, that "minerals grow; that vegetables grow and live; that animals grow, live, and feel." He makes growth common to them all; and in older days than his, some held that even stones and metals, as well as plants and animals, spring from seed. But though certain metals, in their native state, assume the arborescent form, and crystals increase in size, and coral forests throwing out branches like trees, rise from the bottom of the sea, yet no mineral substance can, properly speaking, be said to grow. Growth, that active power by which the ox converts the green grass of the meadow into red flesh, and foul manures are changed into fragrant odours, and all plants and animals appropriate to themselves such materials as are fitted to preserve their being and increase their bulk, is a property

that belongs to life. It is only living things that grow, and all living things do grow. Be it the lichen that clings to the rock, or the eagle that has her nest on its craggy shelf, or man that rends its heart with powder and draws the gold from its bowels—from the germ out of which they spring they grow onwards to maturity; in the words of my text, they "increase more and more."

These words are as true of spiritual as of natural life. According to heathen fables, Minerva, the goddess of wisdom and daughter of Jupiter, sprung full-grown and full-armed from her father's head. No man thus comes from the hand of the Holy Spirit, in sudden, mature, perfect saintship. There is nothing in the spiritual world which resembles this; no, nor even what the natural world presents in the development of the insect tribes. During their last and perfect stage, in the condition, as it is called of the *imago*, be their life long or short, they undergo no increase. So soon as the green worm that once crawled on the ground and fed on garbage, bursting its coffin-shell, comes forth, a creature with silken wings, to roam in the sunny air, to sleep by night on a bed of flowers, and by day banquet on their nectar, it grows no more—neither larger nor wiser; its flight and faculties being as perfect on the day of what may be called its new birth, as when, touched by early frosts or drowned in rain, it dies. Here, indeed, we have a symbol of the resurrection-body as it shall step from the tomb; in beauty perfect, in growth mature; to undergo henceforth, and through eternal ages, neither change nor de-

cay. It is otherwise with the renewed soul. Before it, in righteousness, and knowledge, and true holiness, stretches a field of illimitable progress—upwards and onwards to what it shall be for ever approaching, yet never reach, the throne of God.

Meanwhile, to confine our views only to this world, —who knows his shortcomings and laments them ; who feels with Paul that he has not yet attained, or is already perfect ; that he is far from perfect ; that he is not what he ought to be, and might have been, but also feels how appropriate to the best of us are those words of exhortation, "We beseech you, brethren"—by the mercies of God, by the cross of Christ, by your hopes of heaven ; for the glory of Jesus' name, and the good of his Church ; for the sake of your purity, your peace, your joy, your fitness for heaven, and growth in grace,—"we beseech you that ye increase more and more."

I. In what are we to increase?

"Thou hast multiplied the nation," says the prophet, "and not increased the joy." There is little or no advantage in the increase of some things. It but increases our danger, and adding to our cares, lays weightier burdens on the back of life. Hear the wise man, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver ; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." More riches will certainly not make us happier ; and perhaps, paradoxical as it sounds, they may not even make us richer. The expenditure grows in proportion to the increase of income ; and so again the wise man says, "When

good increase, they increase that eat them ; and what good is there to the owner thereof?" Good! Hear the wise man once more, "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun ; riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." We have seen that as well as Solomon.

Nor is the increase even of wisdom, though a higher and nobler pursuit, without its own drawbacks. It is harder to work with the brain than with the hands ; to hammer out thoughts than iron. Not to be acquired but by toil and self-denial, at the expense often of health, always of labour, and sometimes, as where the pale, emaciated student feeds his midnight lamp with the oil of life, at the expense of life itself, "In much wisdom," as Solomon says, "is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow—of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh."

It is not increase of these things at which my text calls us to aim ; but of such riches as makes it less difficult, and more easy, to get to heaven ; of the wisdom that humbles rather than puffs up its possessor ; of a beauty, unlike woman's, which is the shield in place of being the snare of virtue ; of graces which, unlike a fair form or lovely countenance, defy the ravages of time, and grow more beautiful with age. It is increase of those spiritual endowments which are thus catalogued by Paul as fruits of the Holy Spirit—"Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ;" it is more humility ; more docility ; more

acts of self-denial and works of charity; more prayer and watchfulness; a more tender conscience, and a closer walk with God; a heavenlier temper and a holier life. In all these, and especially in the love that is the spring of all, "I beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more."

II. How we are to increase in these.

1. We are to increase equally.

All our graces are to be cultivated to the neglect of none of them. If one side of a tree grows, and the other does not, the tree acquires a crooked form—is a misshapen thing. Nor are monsters among mankind made only by want of parts, as when the body wants a limb, or the face an eye, or the leg a foot, or the arm a hand; but also by some one part growing in excess of others. Analogous in its results to this is the unequal growth of Christian graces. Let fear, for example, that godly fear which is so strong a safeguard of the soul, grow out of due proportion to faith, and the result is a gloomy, despondent, unhappy Christian. Or, let that zeal which makes us like a flaming fire in the service of our God, grow more than knowledge, prudence, wisdom; and, like a machine without director, or balance-wheel, generating steam faster than it can use it, zeal bursts into extravagance, and carries men away into the regions of wild fanaticism. There are differences of character which, springing from constitutional peculiarities, or early education, grace will modify, but never altogether eradicate on this side the grave. Such are those in Bunyan's pictures, all paint-

ed, no doubt, from life—as well as Mr. Great-heart the giant-killer and hero of a hundred battles, as Mr. Feeble-mind, who started at his own shadow and trembled at the falling of a leaf. There are also differences among Christians which imply no defect; just as there are in countenances which are very unlike, and yet, be the complexion dark or fair, the hair of golden colour or like the raven's wing, are very beautiful. We do not expect or even wish all good men to be alike, any more than I would have all the members of a family alike; all flowers alike—none but roses in the garden, or daisies in the field; the Church of Christ like the meadows below, or the star-spangled heavens above, owing its beauty in part to that variety in unity which marks all the works of God; and mars none of them.

Some saints are remarkable for having one grace in peculiar prominence—faith, for instance; or resignation; or courage; or zeal; or benevolence. Yet though this peculiarity may draw most eyes upon them, and win them most praise, if not "in all the churches," in their neighbourhood, or even in their nation, these are not the most perfect specimens of Christianity. For it is with men as with trees, amongst which the least symmetrical may be the most noticeable. The more perfect the shape of the tree, the more symmetrical the proportion between its trunk and branches, between its height and width, it strikes the eye the less; and it is only on a near approach and closer scrutiny that we take in its size, and gaze with wonder on its towering form, and enormous girth.

The finest specimen of a Christian is he in whom

all the graces, like the strings of an angel's harp, are in the most perfect harmony. Therefore, we are to beware of cultivating one grace or attending to any one duty at the expense of others. That is possible; and never more likely to happen than in these days of recoil from mere speculative theology, and of busy, bustling benevolence. Treading in our Master's steps, we are to go about doing good; yet we may undertake so many works of Christian philanthropy as to trench on the hours that should be sacred to devotion. In seeking the good of others, we may so neglect the cultivation of our own hearts, and the duties we owe to our own families, as to have to cry with the man of old, They made me keeper of vineyards, and my own vineyard I have not kept. On the other hand, like a lark that goes up soaring and singing in heaven, while the hawk below is rifling her nest, we may spend our hours in devotional exercises, in communion with saints and with God, when we should be down here—fighting with the devil; alleviating human misery; righting the wrongs of the oppressed; raising the fallen; reforming the vicious; helping humanity, and by God's help plucking the prey from the lion's jaws. The head, the heart, and the hand, doctrine, devotion, and work, should each have their due share of our time and attention; we working on our life like the ancient sculptor on the dead marble, when he produced forms where each feature was not only beautiful in itself, but in proportion also to every other. On this account these statues of his divinities are the admiration of all ages, being the

perfect models of men and women. Even so, it is by growing equally in the knowledge, and the love, and the life of Christ, that we are to reach the true model of a Christian; and, to use Paul's words, "grow into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

2. We are to increase constantly.

This idea is embodied in all those figures under which our spiritual life is set forth in the word of God. Is it a seed? So soon as the seed is quickened in the soil it grows; grows by night and by day; grows beneath the foot that tramples on it; piercing the rugged clod, turning and twining to round the corner of a stone, it shoots its way upward, till it emerge into the blessed light, and drink the dews of heaven; and under their influences, on and ever on it grows, rises and ripens, till sickles flash, and reapers sing where winter howled over dead fields of snow. Is it the day? From the first faint streak of light that our eye catches in the eastern horizon, how steadily it grows! hill and dale, town and hamlet, woods and winding river, shore and sea, becoming more and more distinct; one star disappearing after another in the grey sky; the fleecy clouds changing into opal, and amber, and purple, and burning gold, until the sun springs up, flaming from his ocean bed; and the daisies open their golden eyes, and the birds sing for joy, and the waves flash and dance in light, and the earth rejoices in perfect day. Is it human life? Hanging on a mother's bosom; sleeping, and by and bye with wakening intelligence smiling in her

arms; on little feet balancing itself so beautifully; trying its first trotting steps; speaking its first stammering words; its affections and faculties opening like the petals of a flower, how does the infant develope itself with each successive year! Infancy growing into prattling childhood; childhood into blooming youth; youth into ripened manhood, till the hand that once played with coral and bells, yonder amid royal pageant, and the blare of trumpets, and the boom of cannon, waves the sceptre of empire over an acclaiming throng—or till the voice that was once but a feeble wail, commands on the reeling deck, or amid the roar of battle; here stirs the deepest passions, or there stills the tumults of the people.

Such is the way that we should grow; should pray, should labour, and should strive to grow. Slow and silent, growth is a thing which you neither see nor hear; yet mark in these cases what its steady, constant progress achieves in the natural world. Should it do less in the spiritual? Is God less omnipotent in grace than nature? By no means. "My grace," he says, "is sufficient for thee;" sufficient for that. Would we rise every morning both to get and to do some good; to cultivate some grace and mortify some sin; to live more holily than yesterday—not to say its bad words, nor indulge its bad wishes, nor repeat its bad deeds; to learn from the experience of the past where we should watch, which is our weak side, what are our besetting sins, taking such precautions as a man who strengthens the dyke where the last floods broke through, or doubles his sentries

where the enemy last surprised him—what progress we should make! we should be a stage nearer heaven every day. If not every day, every year at least, would present a palpable, sensible difference. It is not, but it should be, as easy to tell how long it is since we were born the second time, as the first; our spiritual as our natural age; the years of our new life as those of a tree which we count by the rings that every season adds to its circumference.

The nearer we reach the summit of a hill, the climb is harder; and the higher the eagle soars, ever mounting into thinner air, its flight grows more arduous. Now, both in the case of the foot that has climbed the highest Alp, and of the wing that cleaves the sky above its snowy summit, there is a point where progress ceases—this foot can climb, that wing can fly no higher. It is quite otherwise with spiritual progress. While the higher a believer rises in grace his ascent becomes not more difficult but more easy, he never reaches a point where progress ceases. Begun on earth, it is continued in heaven; the field that lies before us stretching beyond the grave and above the stars—illimitable as space and endless as eternity.

Man, physically considered, grows into maturity, stops, and then returns on his course. The descent on the other side of the hill corresponding with the ascent on this, he goes down much as he went up. The hair drops from his head; the teeth fall from his jaws; the light fades in his eye; he enters on the stage of a second childhood; and at length, naked as he came from his mother's womb, naked he returns thither. The

emblem of his life is the day: first the grey dawn; then sunrise; then the sun flaming in the zenith; then sinking lower and lower, he wheels his course down the western sky; then he sets; then fading twilight; and then the depth of night. But how unlike this to the progress of the immortal spirit! With a course ever onward, upward, Godward, it presents a case somewhat analogous to the mathematical paradox of two bodies that are ever approaching, and yet, though moving through infinite space and for eternal ages, never meet; and never can meet. Even so, though they shall never reach the infinite height and perfection of divinity, the saints in glory, constantly ascending, shall be ever approaching it; so that death which, in a sense, makes us perfect, and introduces us into a state of rest, shall not arrest our progress. Our life, in fact, is like a ship working its way down a river, where the water grows deeper, and the banks grow wider, and the view expands as we move on, till at death, as there, where the waves roar upon the bar, we shall pass out on a great, broad, shoreless ocean, on which, with no limits bounding our progress, we shall advance evermore; growing in the knowledge, and love, and likeness of Christ with the ages of eternity, increasing yet "more and more."

3. We are to make efforts to grow.

Some men have mooted the strange notion that that peculiar adaptation of the bodies of certain animals to their habits, in which we see the wisdom of their Maker, has resulted from the efforts which they made to adapt themselves to their circumstances—that the

heron for instance, by stretching itself up to preserve its feathers from the water of the stream or shore where it fishes, got its limbs lengthened into stilts, and acquired also its taper neck by constant and long continued efforts to strike its prey at the bottom of the pool. Any theory more absurd can hardly be imagined. Yet, in the spiritual kingdom, the very wish and effort to be good has, with God's blessing and through operation of the Holy Spirit, a tendency to improve us. In the attempt to be better we grow better, even as the flapping of a nestling's wing, impotent though it be to raise the bird into the air, fits its pinions for future flight; or as the creeping of an infant on the floor prepares its limbs for walking. It is to efforts, not to idleness, to supineness, to sleep, that God promises the blessing—those heavenly aids, without which the arm of a giant, to say nothing of a child in grace, cannot snap the feeblest cord that binds us to earth and sin. God works; and we are to be fellow-workers with him, that we may "increase more and more."

Cast a sponge into water, and, the fluid filling its empty cells, it swells out before our eyes; increases more and more. There is no effort here, and could be none; for though once a living animal, the sponge is now dead and dry. But it is not as sponges fill with water, nor, to use a Scripture figure often employed, and sometimes misapplied, as Gideon's fleece was filled with dews, that God's people are replenished with his grace. More is needed than simply to bring ourselves in contact with ordinances; to read the Bible; to re-

pair on Sabbath to the church ; to sit down in communion seasons at the Lord's table. The babe, for example, is laid in a mother's arms, and in contact with her breast ; but is laid there only to die, unless, with slumbering instincts awakened, it fasten and suck by its own efforts the nourishment provided for it, independent of itself ; and there, drawing life from a mother's bosom, it lies in her loving arms, the symbol of him who hangs by faith in Christ, and, fed on the sincere milk of the word, is nourished up into the likeness and image of God. And after all, this picture conveys but an adequate idea of what is required of us, in order that we may increase more and more. It is by other and greater efforts than the infant's we are to grow in grace, and get to heaven. Christ's children, like our own, are not always to remain babes. The mother, while rocking her infant's cradle, is hopefully looking forward to a time when her boy shall have grown a man ; to stand up for a mother's cause ; to defend a mother's head ; to go forth to his daily labour ; to win prizes in the race ; if danger and duty summon him, to fight the battles of his king and country. To such active, energetic, and self-denying labours, Christ calls the candidate for a heavenly crown ; for instance, Search the Scriptures—Watch unto prayer—Pray without ceasing—Fight the good fight—Labour for the bread that never perisheth—Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure—Work out your salvation with fear and trembling—See that no man take your crown.

While all our hopes of salvation centre in the cross

of Christ, and all our hopes of progress hang on the promised aids of the Holy Spirit, let us therefore exert ourselves to the utmost; reaching forth to higher attainments, and aiming at daily increase in every holy and Christian habit. What was suitable to us once, should not satisfy us now. The man out-grows the dress of childhood. Down among the rocky hollows of the sea, there are creatures that cast their shell year by year; and up among the storm-beaten cliffs of the mountain, year by year also, the moulting eagle casts her feathers—these that they may walk in larger, stronger mail; the other, that she may soar on broader pinions, and to higher flights. At such increase should we aim; to grow more busy in God's work; to spend more time and money in his service; to perform greater acts of self-denial; to increase both in the heavenliness of our temper, and in the generosity of our gifts. Not content with being what once we were, and doing only what once we did, let us "covet earnestly the best gifts;" attempt the loftiest heights of grace; saying, with the holy ambition of an apostle, When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things. The fulness of the Godhead bodily is in Jesus Christ; and from that exhaustless supply may the Holy Spirit fill us more and more, day by day, till, the moorings strained that bind us to earth, we are ready, on their being severed by the stroke of death, to shoot up to heaven—saying with our Saviour, "I leave the world, and go to the Father." For these ends, Wait on the Lord; wait, I say, on the

Lord,—He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength,—The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

The Christian's Strength.

"Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strenghten thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."—PSALM xxvii. 14.

THE Church of God has often been in a low, languishing, and to all human appearance, in a desperate condition; yet one thing, as Solomon says, is set against another, and it has been at such times that his people have realised most fully the comforts of his providence and gracious presence. These stars shine brightest in dark, winter nights. There was a time, for example, when the Church was reduced to the small number of eight persons; and these eight in imminent danger of perishing. If one plank of the ark had started; if some mountain billow, striking broadside on, had swept her against the rugged summit of a mountain-top lying like a reef below the flood; if any one of the hundred accidents that are daily wrecking other ships had happened to this that sailed a shoreless sea without crew or helm, or helmsman, to so low a pitch was the Church of God reduced, that the wreck of one ship had been her ruin —the whole race of men had perished.

It is astonishing and refreshing to look back on the way God has often extricated his people, when they

seemed hemmed in by destruction—had not a chance of escape; and more still, to see how Haman swung on the gallows which he raised for Mordecai, how the persecutors of the three Hebrew children were consumed in the flames they had kindled for them, and how the Red Sea, into which the Egyptians would have driven God's people, became, not the grave of the oppressed, but of their oppressors. Thus, in the days of old, God made the wrath of man and of devils also to praise him. He does so still. The trials and temptations to which he leaves his saints exposed shall be but the storm that flashes, and thunders, and roars through the air to leave it fresher and purer than before.

Nor does God leave his children comfortless during their trials, amid such troubles as David was in when he penned his psalm. He was beset by malignant enemies. "Mine enemies and my foes," he says, "come upon me to eat up my flesh," but he adds, "they stumbled and fell." With such confidence has God inspired him, that he is ready, single handed, Samson-like, to meet a host in battle. Though not these, he says, but "an host, should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." He knows where to fly to —"In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock: and now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me." He sits where the billows cannot reach him, let them rage and foam as they may. He had the most perfect confidence in the wisdom, power, and

love of his God. This, when all things looked dark and dreary, sustained him; "I had fainted," he says, "unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

To recognize the hand of God in everything; to believe that all that is done on earth is first decreed in heaven, and that neither an angel nor a sparrow falls without the Father; in the loudest thunder to hear his voice; in the clouds that cast their shadow on our path, to see his chariot; through the gloom of life's darkest night, and amid the billows of its stormiest sea, to see Jesus walking; to hear him saying, It is I, be not afraid; this is to be happy in the midst of misery, and to enjoy peace within when all is trouble without. Waiting on God, with such a faith on his providence, how many fears would his people be spared; and how would they be delivered from an impatience which, running before providence instead of waiting on it, fills their mind with discontent, and not seldom tempts them into sin. In my text, David gives us his own experience. He tells where he had found his strength, and teaches us where to find ours. In now considering these words, and, taking them in a wider, than perhaps their original, sense, let us consider,—

I. How we are to wait on God.

1. We are to wait on God in his ordinances.

Seek ye the Lord, says the prophet, while he may be found; but we are not only to seek the Lord while he may be found, but also where he may be found.

Where did Simeon and Anna wait for the Consolation of Israel? Not in their own homes, nor in Herod's palace, nor amid scenes of worldly greatness, nor even amid the rocks of Sinai, where God in the days of old had descended with a shout, "The Lord with the sound of a trumpet." They waited for him in the temple; and in the temple found him. When they had lost their son, our Saviour, where did Joseph and Mary find him? As a mother when the alarm rises that her child is missing, flies from house to house, from neighbour to neighbour, to cry, Is my boy here? so ran Mary from company to company of the multitude who were returning with her from Jerusalem. They had not seen him. And now with Joseph, her speed increasing with her fears, she hurries back to the city; three days they wander up and down its streets; with fainting hearts and weary limbs three long days they seek him; and when hope so ill to kill and slow to die in a mother's heart, whether she look for the return of the lost, or the recovery of the sick, or the reform of the profligate, had almost expired in Mary's bosom, they thought of the Temple. Strange that the first place they should have sought him in, was the last they thought of. But there they found the child, sitting among its astonished and grey-haired elders, asking, and answering questions. And how often has it happened that many, while waiting upon God in the public ordinances of religion, and asking what shall I do to be saved, have found a Saviour in the church; and their hearts have there echoed the old man's words when, bending over

the infant Jesus, he exclaimed, Mine eyes have seen thy salvation. And as Mary also found the son she had lost in the temple, how many who, so to speak, had lost Christ, lost a sense of his favour and of their interest in him and his salvation, have got them back again, and been restored to peace within the house of God. Were Jesus as dear to us as a Saviour, as he was to Mary as a son, we would seek in every place, and never rest till we found him; still nowhere is the sinner more likely, or so likely, to find him, as where the crowd is met and the cross is raised—in his Father's house of business. "He loveth the gates of Sion more than all the tabernacles of Jacob."

Besides the public ordinances of religion, such as the communion table and Sabbath services, in the use of which we are to wait upon the Lord, there are other means of grace at our service; and still more fully within our reach. The communion table is but occasionally spread, and the doors of the church may be thrown open only once a week; but the pages of the Bible are always open, and the gates of prayer, like those of heaven, are never shut. Prayer is like a private postern, through which, as well by night as by day, we have the privilege of constant access to the palace and presence of the King. In the words we learned from a mother's lips, and lisped at her knee, prayer is the first door that is open; and it is the last that is shut. There, where a man is tossing on the bed of death, and the Bible lies shut on his pillow, for he cannot read it, and to the promises of the gospel,

which we pour into his ear, he gives no sign of assent, for he cannot hear us, mark these moving lips; listen to these broken sentences. Behold he prayeth! and his spirit, breathed out in a groan or a sigh, flies heavenward on the wings of prayer.

We are to wait on God in the devout and diligent use of all these means of grace—in the daily, use of the private means. On the strength of one meal Moses and Elijah lived forty days, and the benefit of sacrament or of Sabbath may possibly last till the next return; but it is as impossible for the soul to live and thrive without daily prayer, as for the body to live and thrive without daily food. Our graces are like plants that need daily watering; watches that need daily winding; lamps that need daily filling; bodies that need daily feeding. It is as necessary for the graces of the inner, as for the strength, and health, and life of the outward man that we should wait on God, to say, "Give me day by day my daily bread."

2. We are to wait on God in his ordinance with faith and perseverance.

Spring winds have melted the snows of winter and dried the soil; and now the husbandman goes forth with plow and harrows to the field, and waits for sunshine and showers to quicken the seed which he spreads broadcast upon the ground. In buds bursting on the trees, in flowers waking from their winter sleep, his eye may catch no sign that it shall ever revive, but he sows in faith that the season will come—he waits and he works for it. Far away from the billows that are breaking out on the sandy shore, the vessel lies upon

the beach, doomed as it would seem to rot; why then do men climb her shrouds, and man the yards, and shake out broad sheets of canvas, and loose her moorings, to catch the breeze and bear away across the deep? Theirs are acts of faith; they believe in the law of tides, and that every billow breaking nearer and nearer, the waters at length shall wash her keel, and, rising on her sides, float her off the sands—they wait and work for that. Have they that plough the land, or plough the sea, such faith in the stability of the laws of nature; and shall we have less faith in the word of God? Times and seasons are not revealed to us; but that forms no reason why we should not expect the blessing—working and waiting for it.

Go wash seven times in Jordan and thy flesh shall be made whole, was the command laid on the Syrian leper; and what had we thought of him, had he, because there was no improvement at the second, nor at the third, nor at the fourth plunge, left the water without that seventh baptism from which he rose completely cured—"his flesh again like unto the flesh of a little child!" Though God has not informed us how often we must ask before we receive, why should we grow weary waiting? We have his word for it, that whether it be the pardon of our sins through the blood of Jesus, or the sanctification of our spirits through his own, applied for in faith and perseverance, they shall be ours; and what better security than his word could we have, or what security so good? See how success crowns faith and perseverance! Look at the blind men who stood by the gate of Jericho; they make the air resound

with their cries; the farther Christ goes from them, the louder their appeals; the more they are told to hold their peace, the more they cry, "Son of David, have mercy upon us!" Look at Paul when he sought to be relieved of the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him! To his first prayer no answer was returned, but that only made him send a second; and the silence that followed, that only made him send a third; he got his answer then—a gracious answer. But what if he had not? He would have sent a fourth, or a fifth; nor have ceased to pray, but when we should cease, that is, when a man dying of hunger ceases to ask for food—who asks so long as he can move his tongue; and when he cannot speak, holds out his skinny hand for bread. Give God no rest; take none yourselves. How often have I seen a little child throw its arms around its father's neck, and win, by kisses, and importunities, and tears, what had been refused! Who has not yielded to importunity, even when a dumb animal looked up with suppliant eyes in our face for food? Is God less pitiful than we? Is there no tender meaning in the term, Father! by which we are taught to address him? What man is there of you, says our Lord, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.

Turn to our Lord's history and shew me the man who sought his ear in vain; the suppliant he dismissed

unsatisfied, the sinner he sent away unpardoned. The impotent man might sit thirty years at Bethesda's pool, every day constant in his attendance, with eager eye fixed on the waters, watching their troubling — the sign of virtue, and of the angels descent; and unhappy man, all in vain! But who has ever so prayed, waited, and watched for the salvation of his soul; and done that in vain? Never. Never has the promise failed. "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall be faint and weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

II. They that wait on the Lord shall receive strength.

Thus God shall make good his promise, As thy days are, so shall thy strength be. Why then, it may be asked, do men go from the house of God and from a communion table to be worsted "as at other times before," by the devil, the world, and the flesh? Baptize a withering plant with water, and it lifts up its head, casts off the old leaves, and puts out a fresh crop of

buds and blossoms; or carry a cup of water, or of wine, to the lips of a fainting man, and his pulse beats again; the blood returns to his cheek; he opens his eyes; he rises to his feet, if a racer to resume the course, if a soldier to renew the combat. And if it be true, that like water to a languishing flower, or wine to a fainting man, so are the ordinances of religion to the soul, why are men often no better of them? why are they like "clouds without rain" that give their shadows, but no showers, to brown barren fields? This admits of an easy explanation.

The ordinances of religion are compared to wells of water; but then, they are like Jacob's well. The water lies far below the surface; and to the men of the world, the mere professor of religion who has the name but not the faith of a Christian, we may say, as the woman said to our Lord, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Faith is, as it were, the rope, and our souls the vessel which we let down into this well to fill them with living water. But that they do no good to some, forms no reason why we should despise, or neglect ordinances. It is no fault in the bread, that, thrust between a dead man's teeth, it does not nourish him. The truth is, that we must have spiritual to get the benefit of religious ordinances. Water will revive a withering, but not a withered plant; wine will restore a dying, but not a dead man; the breath of your mouth, or the breeze of heaven, will rekindle the smouldering coal, but not the cold, grey ashes of the hearth. And it is only spiritual life that can derive benefit from such ordinances as are

intended to revive the faint and give strength to the weary.

Were they to speak their own experience, many who come to the sacrament and go to the church would say, What is the Lord that we should serve him? what profit shall we have if we pray to him? Still there is no genuine Christian but will set to his seal that God's promises are true; but has often found himself in times of trouble, in seasons of trial and temptation, greatly refreshed and strengthened by waiting on the Lord. What though the disciples, within a few hours of leaving the communion table, gave its vows to the winds; bent like reeds before the blast; and, instead of rallying round their master as they had promised, played the part of cowards—flung away their weapons and fled the field. They had been waiting on the Lord; and was this all they got; or is it all we shall get by doing so? These questions may be asked; but they prove nothing against the truth of God's word. It is not the fact that they went from the communion table to flee. That is not a correct statement of the case. They did not go from making vows, from professing that they would die with the Lord—one to deny, and all to desert him. After supper they went to sleep; and from that, not from their knees, they rose to flee. The husbandman covers the seed when he has sown it; the workman rivits the nail when he has driven it; and had the disciples followed up the work of communion with the work of prayer, they would have risen from their knees, if need be, to die, but in no case to deny their Master.

The case of the disciples only proves how we shall lose our strength by not waiting on the Lord; as the case of Sampson, on the other hand, proves how, when our strength is lost, we shall have it restored. Delilah had shorn his locks; the Philistines had put out his eyes; and he who was once their terror, had now become their sport. They have no fear of Samson now, but crowd to the theatre where he is to afford them amusement, till the court below is thronged to the doors, and three thousand cluster like bees on the roof that rests on the two main pillars of the building. He is brought in; he makes them sport a while. Once, when the breeze of heaven played with his flowing locks, he paused not in battle till, before the sweep of his arm, the field was covered with a thousand dead; but his locks have been shorn, his strength is gone, and, soon weary, depressed in heart and spirit, he is led to gather breath, and rest himself against the massive pillars of the capacious building. He leans on them for a while, fainting and exhausted. Then all of a sudden he startles the house, and turns all eyes on him by his attitude and his cry, Let me die with the Philistines! Samson is himself again. He bows himself on the pillars. The solid columns bend beneath his strength; then the loud crash of the falling house, and the wild shriek of the thousands it buries, rise together to heaven; and then all is silent, as on the waters into which the ship has gone down with her shrieking crew. Samson found the strength he had lost—"the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." Where? How did his day, after

so dark a noon, close with such a brilliant sunset? He waited on the Lord. Rising in prayer to heaven, he drew strength from God. Go thou and do likewise. Wait on the Lord and he shall strengthen your heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.

The Christian's Work.

"There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."—
Joshua xiii. 1.

The land of Canaan, to which my text refers, has been employed both by inspired and uninspired men, as a type of heaven—of the happy rest on which believers enter at the dread hour of death. Nor does it need a lively fancy to see the salient points in the history of a saint as they are set forth in the events of that wonderous journey which began in Egypt, and ended in the land of promise.

In the slavery, oppression, degradation, and intolerable miseries which the Hebrews suffered in the house of bondage, all who have been brought by God's grace to know, and feel, the evil of sin, see a striking figure of the estate of sin and misery in which every man is born. Then look at Moses, the leader of their exodus! Sprung from the race whom he was to deliver, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh; plucked in early infancy from violent and murderous hands; reappearing, after years of retirement and obscurity, on the stage where he was to play so conspicuous a part; making miracles, whether he turned water into blood, or the sea into dry land, or the rock into flowing

streams, common things; standing between the wrath of an offended God, and a stiff-necked and guilty people; on such terms of familiar intercourse with God himself, as no mere mortal was before, or has been since; resigning his commission only when he had brought Israel through innumerable, and, to all but divine power, insurmountable difficulties, to the banks of Jordan; and then with an eye not dimmed, nor strength abated, nor mark of age on his raven locks, ascending a mountain to vanish on a sudden, and for ever from view—Moses in these, as well as other, respects is a remarkable type of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then look at the Hebrew host! Through the darkness of night, and the very depths of the ocean, see them in haste and alarm making for the other shore. Next morning, they find themselves saved, at liberty—the sea strewing her beach with the carcasses of their enemies, and rolling her joyous waves between Israel and the land of bondage. What an image of that conversion, new birth, heavenly baptism, burial to sin, through which the child of God passes, on leaving nature to enter upon a state of grace; with which he begins his pilgrimage to heaven, and without which our Lord declares that no man shall see the kingdom of God.

The journey now begins. How full it is of events and circumstances, that more or less clearly symbolize those of the Christian's life!

The Hebrew host subsist on food which is not reaped on the fields of earth, but falls from the skies; the water they drink is not found in pools, nor drawn

from wells, but gushes to the stroke of Moses' rod from a flinty rock ; their steps are guided through the pathless desert by a pillar that moves before them, forming a cloudy screen in the heat of day, and in the midnight darkness a blazing light—things these which were the types of good things to come through Him who is the Rock of Ages, the true Bread from heaven, the pillar of all our hopes, the divine guide and guardian of a believer's heavenward way. Nor do the types and points of resemblance between the host in the desert, and Christ's church on earth, end here. In their discontent and outbursts of rebellion, in their longings to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt, in their coward fears and frequent backslidings, and in the whole of that journey of many comforts, but also of many hardships—of great mercies on the part of God, and great sins on theirs, who can fail to see a remarkable type of the lights and shadows, the faults and failings, of every believer's life ?

The journey now reaches its close ; and the host, purified through the deaths of forty years from the bad elements it brought out of Egypt, arrives on the banks of Jordan. Their feet have reached the end of a long, weary pilgrimage ; nor does anything now but a deep, dark flood interpose between them and the green fields, and golden harvests, and vine-clad hills, on which they gaze with rapture. That flood is a symbol of the river of death ; and when Jordan's waters are di ided, and, types of Jesus, the white-robed priests hold the bed of the stream till the last Hebrew is over, and the host, with "not a hoof left behind," enters the

promised land, we have an emblem of the child of God going down at the close of life into the river—entering by death into eternal rest.

Thus far the analogy holds; in these particulars, but not in others. Heaven is the peculiar dwelling-place of God; and its happy tenants are holy angels and the redeemed—the spirits of just men made perfect; and on the other side of death's dark flood the shore is lined with "shining ones," some with palms, some with harps, who wait to bid us welcome to the realms of bliss. How different the passage of Jordan! The Hebrews entered Canaan marching, sword in hand, marshalled for battle. They had to meet, and to fight the enemy in many a bloody field. The land was theirs by promise, but not by possession. Years have passed since they entered it; Joshua's sun is now nigh its setting; still, in the words of my text, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed."

Thus Canaan, though commonly used as a type of heaven, is, in some of its aspects, a type rather of a state of grace than of a state of glory. And taking this view of it, I remark that—

I. Canaan, as the Israelites found it, represents the state of man's heart when the grace of God enters it.

When the Hebrews burst like a flood into the Land of Promise, it was peopled by bold, active, warlike tribes, who were as superior to their invaders in the arts of peace, as in those of war. The land was cultivated like a garden, and peopled like a bee-hive or

an ant-hill ; and on its plains, which were thickly studded with towns and villages, stood many a mighty city. Its armies were recruited, not from the dregs of towns, but by a race of giants ; walls of immense strength and height guarded its principal cities ; and on fortalices perched on many a rocky crag, War sat armed—guarding the treasures of trade and husbandry, and ready to do battle for a country well worth defending, flowing with corn, and oil, and wine, and milk, and honey.

This is no fancied picture. Hear the report of the spies whom Moses sent out to explore the land—"We came into the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey ; nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South ; and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains ; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan ; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature : There we saw, the giants the sons of Anak ; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in theirs."

Such was the state of Canaan ; and such the people who held it, and were prepared to fight for it, against all comers. And where could we find a truer picture of the bad habits, powerful corruptions, and unholy passions of the unrenewed heart, than in the Jebusites, Amalekites, Amorites, Hittites, and Canaanites—the heathen, from whose stout hands, for God, and by

God's help, Joshua must wrest this fair and lovely land. Its native inhabitants were idolatrous, worshipping every God but the true one; gross sensualists indulging in brutal pleasures, and living in the practice of such abominable immoralities as at once filled other nations with shame, and God with such anger that he declared he would spue them out of his mouth; monsters of inhumanity, who added cruelty to conquest, and took pride in their courts offering such a spectacle as this:—Three score and ten kings, saith the king of Jerusalem, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table. How lamentable that so fair a land should be possessed by such tenants.

There is something infinitely more lamentable. Think of a soul like thine, made at first in the image of God; a being such as thou art, once occupying a rank in creation next to and but a little lower than that of angels; a heart like thine which, though blighted by sin, still retains some traces of departed glory—alienated from the true God, held captive of the devil, ruled by unholy passions, full of corruptions as difficult to root out as were these sons of Anak who, in Goliath and his giant race, disturbed the peace of Israel, and defied the armies of the living God many long years after the land was, in a sense, both conquered and possessed. The Hebrews did not enter Canaan to find an empty land, which they had nothing to do but to occupy; nor does Jesus, when he enters our heart by his Spirit and saving grace. It is in possession of his enemies. They are there to dispute his rights, and resist his entrance

—sons of Anak, indeed ; more formidable still ; for giant sins are less easily conquered than giant men. Let David bear witness. Did not he find it easier, when a beardless lad, to overcome a son of Anak, than when a mature and saintly man, to master his vicious passions, and, ruling his own spirit, conquer himself.

II. The blessings of the kingdom of grace, like those of Canaan, have to be fought for.

A band of emigrants, sailing from their native shores to seek a home in our colonies, presents almost no analogy to the Hebrew nation in its exodus from Egypt, and its march through the desert to the land of Canaan. As a tree rudely torn from its birth-place leaves in broken, bleeding fibres, part of its roots behind, our emigrants leave affections clinging to the old land, to their brothers, their sisters, their parents, to the homes and churches—to the very graves they leave behind them—and from the deck of the ship that bears them away, they continue to gaze fixedly and sorrowfully, and with tears gushing from their eyes, on their own blue mountains, till they sink beneath the waves. But the contrast between them and the Israelites does not lie so much in the feelings with which each left the old land, as in their manner of entering the new one. The only arms which our emigrant carries, are spade and plough to subdue the soil, and axe to subdue the forests. No hostile foe lines the beach to dispute his landing. A few wretched, degraded, half naked savages, slowly retreating before the steps of civilization, and rapidly perishing from the face of the earth, before

the vices which Christians have taught them to practice, are the thinly scattered tenants of rolling prairie and gloomy forest. The emigrant plunges into the woods, where he finds nothing but natural difficulties to contend with. They fall before his stout arm. The only wounds he inflicts are made by his axe on the trees, and by his ploughshare on the bosom of a virgin soil. By day he works ; on Sabbath he rests, and he sleeps away the night safe from harm within his rude log-cabin. And after a few busy years, a smiling garden and fields of golden corn, and a rose-bowered home, and happy, sun-browned children playing around his door, proclaim the triumphs, and reward the toils, of honest industry. He sowed in tears, but he reaps in joy.

On entering Canaan the children of Israel were called to other labours. They had none of the ordinary work of emigrants to undertake. They had neither forests to clear ; nor soil to break up ; nor fields to fence ; nor vines to plant ; nor houses to rear ; nor cities to build. These were all furnished to their hand—like the blessings of salvation, which are without money or price. There lay the land across Jordan's rolling flood ; and to eyes weary of the glaring sand, how beautiful its verdure, and to feet weary of a long, wandering pilgrimage, how tempting its rest. It was theirs by gift, not by right ; theirs not by purchase, but by promise. They had it not yet in possession. They must wrest it from the stout heathen who held it ; and, God blessing them, and fighting on their side, they must reap these fields, not with songs and

peaceful sickles, but with shouts of battle and the sword of war.

The blessings of the kingdom also are the believer's by free gift, the purchase of a Saviour's blood, and the promise of him who is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Yet, no more than the Israelites in the days of old, does any man enter on the easy, undisputed, peaceful possession of them,—or find that so soon as he is converted he enters into rest, and has nothing more to do than to sit down and enjoy the blessings prefigured by that country which was full of corn and wine, and flowed with milk and honey. Rest! There is a rest that remaineth for the people of God; but it is in heaven, not here. Here, we have to fight with corruptions difficult to kill, breaking out like old sores which had been skinned over; bursting out like a fire that was smouldering in its ashes, and only needed a breath to blow it into flame! Here, we have to maintain a continual watch against, and wage incessant warfare with, bad habits, bad desires, bad propensities. Here, these like the old Canaanites, fight hard to keep what they hold, and to regain what they have lost. The fate which God pronounced on the Canaanites, Jebusites, Hittites, Perizzites, Amalekites, is that to which we are to doom our dearest sins. They were to drive them out of the land—to slay them. Nor, child of God, fancy that your state is a right one, or that your work is done, so long as one sin lives within you—be it pride, ambition, envy, lust, malice, an ugly or a beautiful fiend; be its type the Jebusite, that met Israel in battle, or this

lovely woman who throws her chains over the strong man's neck, and leads him captive—the dupe of her fascinating, but fatal charms. You must spare neither. Bring out every sin before the Lord, and let it be condemned to death ; pass the sword of the Spirit through and through it, till it has breathed out its cursed life, and has no more dominion over you. As the apostle says, Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity. Beware how you leave innate corruption, and old sinful habits, to draw down on you the anger of a holy God, and the afflictions threatened on Israel in these words, "If ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, then it shall come to pass, that those which you let remain shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your flesh ; and shall vex you in the land wherever ye dwell."

III. The most advanced Christian has much to do in the way of sanctification.

We think of an aged Christian as of one seated on the banks of Jordan, enjoying the calm evening of a busy, holy, useful life—looking back on the past without any other regret than what springs from the recollection of his sins, and looking forward on the future without the shadow of a fear ; as a servant with his task done, waiting to receive his wages, and the welcome summons that calls him home. We fancy him by the eye of faith piercing the mists that hang over death's dark flood ; and as he descries the shining ones on the other shore, stretching out his aged arms, and crying, as he longs to be gone and be with them, O

that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest.

Our fancy's picture may be beautiful. It is more beautiful than true; such cases are rare. The Christian commonly dies in harness, in the battle-field, in the thick of battle, fighting on to the last gasp. The servant commonly needs all his time for his work; and is engaged down to life's last hour—to the cry, Behold, the bridegroom cometh—trimming his lamp, and setting the house in order. The fruit does not hang on the branch, but commonly drops so soon as it is mellow; and the corn shakes out so soon as it is ripe. The death-bed of the saint has been indeed the scene of his hardest work, his deepest grief, his bitterest tears, and the most terrible assaults of the Evil One. "Stern all" is the cry when the monster of the deep begins his dying struggles; and then every man bends to his oar, pulling out of the sweep of that tremendous tail, which, as she pours out her heart's blood, beats the billows and churns them into crimsoned foam. Not less formidable sometimes are the last, the dying struggles of sin. What says our Lord? "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force;" and it happens there as with a beleaguered city at the storming—the hardest fight is in the breach; the battle rages fiercest just before it ceases, and with a few more strokes, the city is entered, and the prize is won.

How truly may it be said to the most experienced, aged, honoured Christian, as the Lord said to Joshua, Thou art old and well stricken in years, and yet there

is much land to be possessed. Sin still has more or less power over you, and it should have none; your corruptions are wounded, dying of mortal wounds, but they are not yet dead; your affections are set on heaven; yet how much are they still entangled with earthly things; your heart, like the needle of a sailor's compass to its pole, points to Christ, but how easily is it disturbed, how tremblingly and unsteady does it often point to him; your spirit has wings, but how short are its flights, and how often, like a half fledged eaglet, has it to seek the nest, and come back to rest on the Rock of Ages; your soul is a garden in which, when north and south winds blow to call out its spices, Christ delights to walk, but with many a beautiful flower, how many vile weeds are there—ready to spring up, and ill to keep down; requiring constant care and watching.

Indeed, so many impurities and imperfections cleave to the best of us, that it seems to me a change must take place at death only second to what took place at conversion. The holiness of the holiest man, how far short it is of the holiness of heaven! A great deal of sin is in every case left behind with the body, to be, thank God, for ever buried in its grave; and could we see the spirit it its departure, as Elisha saw his ascending master, we should see a mantle of impurity and imperfection dropt from the chariot that bears it to the skies. In the very hour of death, therefore, the Spirit of God must crown all his other labours with a rapid and extraordinary work of sanctifying. How that is done, is a mystery which we cannot fathom; but it would seem as if grace, like the species of *cereus*

which opens its gorgeous flower only at midnight, burst out into fullest beauty amid the darkness of a dying hour. It is enough for us to know that God will perfect that which concerneth us; that he will bring us safely home; and that no vessel chartered for glory, shall be lost at the harbour's mouth. It takes one whole summer, with its showers and sunshines, to ripen the fields of corn; it takes five hundred summers to bring the oak to full maturity; but he at whose word the earth sprang into being, bearing on its bosom loaded orchards, and golden harvests, and clustering vines, the tall palm, and the gigantic cedar, woman in full blown charms, and man in his perfect manhood, he with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is able in the twinkling of an eye to complete and crown the work of his grace. He will do it. He that began a good work in you will carry it on to the day of the Lord Jesus; and thus apparelled in the righteousness of his Son, and wholly sanctified by the power of his Spirit, his saints shall appear before him—"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

The Christian's Triumph.

"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"—Jer. xii. 5.

One of the greatest battles on record was fought and won, seven hundred years ago, by the merchants and artizans of Brussels against the arms of France. Reduced by famine to the greatest straits, the city one evening opened her beleaguered gates, not to admit the enemy, but that such as were able to carry arms might march out—to make their last throw in the bloody game of war. Their resolution strung to the highest tension, they were resolved to do or die. They had it from the lips of their wives and daughters that, whatever were the result of to-morrow's battle, they should be safe from the violence of a brutal soldiery. If their fathers and brothers conquered, they would be at the gates to receive them in their arms: if fortune declared for the enemy, still they had a refuge—the last refuge of the oppressed, the grave. They would fire the city, and throwing themselves into the flames, leave nought to the spoiler but blackened corpses, and smoking ruins. This forlorn hope, on leaving their families, carried only as much food as would suffice for one meal.

If God was pleased to bless their arms, they would get plenty more; on the other hand, if the day was lost, they would need no more. The night, which was falling down when they came in sight of the banners and tents of France, was spent by their enemies in riot and carousings. It was spent by these wise, brave burghers in seeking rest for to-morrow's fight; and by their leaders, in making the most skillful arrangements.

The men of Brussels rose with the dawn, and took what was to some, and might be to all, their last earthly meal. Knowing that they, a few rude townsmen, had no chance against the magnificent host of France unless God helped the fight for home, and wife, and children, and liberty, they cried to Heaven for help. Arrayed in sacred vestments, with the symbols of salvation in their hands, the priests went up and down their ranks. Every man made confession, and received the rites administered to the dying. The solemn service concluded, they rose from their knees; closed their ranks; levelled their pikes; and wheeling round so as to throw the glare of the sun in the eyes of the enemy, came down on their lines an avalanch of steel. The charge was irresistible. They bore cuirass and knightly lance before them; and these base-born traders scattered the chivalry of France, like smoke before the wind, and chaff before the whirlwind.

Such is a story of the olden time, as told by Froissart in his Chronicles. It illustrates a remarkable saying of one who fought many battles, and seldom, if ever, lost any. Asked to what he attributed his remarkable success, he replied, I owe it, under God,

to this, that I made it a rule never to despise an enemy.

To what warfare is this rule so applicable as to the Christian's; to the battles of the faith; to those conflicts which the believer is called to wage with Satan, the world and the flesh? His past experience, a careful examination of the circumstances in which he has failed, and of those also in which he has conquered, cannot fail to prove that. Those works are commonly best done which we count most difficult. The athlete leaps the highest who bends the lowest to the spring; and Satan proves to be least when he looks most formidable. Thus "stand in awe, and sin not," are joined as cause and effect. For the way to sin not is just to stand in awe; never to feel too secure; never to underrate the difficulty of a duty; never, be it the world, the devil, or the flesh, to despise the power of our enemy. Is not that just what Scripture teaches in these words—What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch; again, Pray that ye enter not into temptation; again, Put on the whole armour of God; again, Having done all, Stand?

Extremes meet. This adage applies as well to spiritual as to common things; and thus it is that despondency—the fear that we shall never succeed, by depressing a man's energies, and paralysing his power, lead to disaster, almost as certainly as presumptuous pride. For example: Saul owed his defeat more to the malign influence of the witch of Endor than to the arms of the Philistines. When she buried hope in his brave heart, she dug his grave; victory vanished with

the mantled phantom; and when Saul, pale, haggard, his spirits depressed, his courage sunken as his eye, went to fight, he had not a chance. The battle of Gilboa was lost before it was begun. Despair, in truth, is about as bad a leader as presumption—this is Scylla, that Charybdis; and both extremes, the rock, horrid with breakers, and the glassy but treacherous whirlpool, are alike fatal. Here, how true the heathen proverb, The middle is the safe passage! In spiritual matters we are, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and of the Word of God, to steer right between the two; and, to help you forward in this safe and blessed course, let me explain and answer the question, "If ye have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, how will ye contend with horses?"—in other words, if you have not done the less, how can you do the greater?

The difficulty implied by this proverb appears—

I. In this, That man is less a match for Satan now than when Satan, at their first encounter, proved himself more than a match for man.

In Eden, our first parents and the tempter were not unequally matched. Belonging to a superior race of intelligent beings, he had more mental, but they, on the other hand, being still innocent, were superior to him in moral power. Thus Eve, like one who, though he brings less strength, brings better weapons to the field of battle than his enemy, might be considered as a fair match for the devil. Vice cannot look virtue in the face, any more than an owl can the sun; and,

innocence still, imperfect though it be, seems to possess such power over guilt as the eye of a man has over a lion—the savage beast quails before his fixed and steady look. Clad in his panoply of heavenly armour, it was Eve's own fault that the simplicity of the dove did not prove more than a match for the cunning of the serpent; but it did not; and you know the result. It burns in the flames of hell; it sounded from the cross in the groans of Calvary; it rises in the corruptions of our degenerate nature; it is written on the blotted pages of every man's history; it shall be engraven on every man's tomb. Beneath its burden the whole creation groaneth, and is in pain until now; waiting for redemption till he come who shall free the prisoners and lead captivity captive; and crying, O Lord, how long, holy and true? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! why tarry thy chariot wheels?

Defeated in Eden, where now can a man look for success? overcome in our state of innocence, what hope, it may be asked, remains for us in one of guilt? The bravest soldiers hang back from the breach, where, as it belches forth fire and smoke, they have seen the flower of the army fall; mowed down like grass. The bravest seamen dread the storm which has wrecked, with the stout ship, the gallant life-boat that had gone to save its crew; men saying, If with her brave hands and buoyant power she, whelmed among the waves, could not live in such a sea, what chance for common craft? And what chance for us where our first parents perished? how can guilt stand

where innocence fell? How can poor, fallen creatures, such as we are, expect to conquer an enemy who has won his accursed victories in heaven as well as on earth, and triumphed over the innocence both of angels and of men! Summoned to a holy war, we are called to fight the good fight, and to resist the devil; but is it not with us as if I were to raise a sick man from his bed, and when the earth was spinning round to his dizzy eyes, bid him fight an enemy that had conquered him when health bloomed on his palid cheek, and strength lay in the arm that hangs powerless by his side? What chance have infants against the lion that, with bristling mane, lashing tail, and flashing eyes, stands with his paw on the bleeding body of their mother? When traitors swarm in her streets, what hope has the city to resist the foe that in loyal days scaled, and breached, and carried its walls? We have been reduced to slavery; and did bondsmen ever win where freemen lost? Hope there is none for us out of Christ. Our only hope is David's, that day, when, on presenting himself to do battle with the giant, Goliath, feeling insulted to be bearded by a beardless boy, exclaimed, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves!" Come on, rush to thy doom; and "I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field." Whereupon the stripling, strong in faith, replied, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield; but I come unto thee in the name of the Lord God of hosts." And but that we go to battle with our spiritual enemies, and him who conquered the innocence of Eden,

in the name of Jesus, and backed "by the Lord God of hosts," we had had no answer to the question, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses?"

II. If we were overcome by sin ere it had grown into strength, we are now less able to resist it.

The morning, with every flower glistening in dews, the fresh air loaded with perfumes, the hills bathed in golden light, the skies ringing with the song of larks, is beautiful. Beautiful as is the morning of day, so is that of life. Fallen though we are, there remains a purity, modesty, ingenuousness, and tenderness of conscience, about childhood, that looks as if the glory of Eden yet lingered over it, like the light of day on hill-tops at even, when the sun is down. The word of God, no doubt, declares infants as well as others to be dead in trespasses and sin: and I don't say but there is death; still it is like death before the body has grown stiff and cold, the colour of life fled the cheek, or decay effaced its beauty. Look at a little child! It does not behave itself unseemly; does not rejoice in iniquity; does not glory in its shame; nor stand with unblushing front before a shocked and wondering world to avow its vileness, and proclaim itself seducer, liar, murderer. Blushes mantle on its cheek; and it has a conscience in its bosom, which protests against thoughts, and words, and actions, that men live to boast of. Sins, afterwards committed without compunction, and rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue, are followed in early life by fears and un-

easy feelings, stings of conscience and bitings of remorse; and the child is no more like what the man becomes, than a rose-bud, bursting its sheath, breathing odours, and opening into beauty, is like that vile, soiled, and rotten thing which I have seen hanging on the leafless branch—a nest of worms, and smelling rank of decay. It has wrung our heart, as we looked on some lost, and loathsome creature—the pest of society, and the shame of her sex—to think of the days when she was a smiling infant in a mother's happy arms, or, ignorant of evil, lisped long-forgotten prayers at a mother's knee; when her voice rose in the psalms of family worship, or of the house of God, like the song of a seraph in the skies. Alas! "How is the gold become dim? how is the most fine gold changed?"

Justifying this sad description, The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies—alas! how soon does sin cloud life's brightest dawn! But then if, in early life, when sin was comparatively weak and conscience was comparatively strong, we were so easily, and so often overcome by temptation, what hope for us, when this order is reversed; when conscience has become weak, and sin grown strong? If we were no match for the cub, how shall we conquer the grown lion? If we had not strength to pull out the sapling, how are we to root up the tree? If it exceeded our utmost power to turn the stream near its mountain cradle, how shall we turn the river that, red, roaring, swollen, pours its flood on to the sea? If we

could not arrest the stone on the brow of the hill, how shall we stop it when, gathering speed at every turn, and force at every bound, it rushes into the valley with resistless might? Sin gaining such power by time and habit, "If we have run with the footmen and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses?" Spirit of God! but for thy gracious aids the attempt were hopeless.

Not without the strongest reason does the wise man address himself to the young, saying, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" for the difficulty of resisting the bad and corrupt passions of our nature grows with man's growth, and strengthens with his strength. Some things become weak and wear away by use; but not the power of sin. Like the muscles of a blacksmith's brawny arm, the more it is used the stronger it grows; and thus all sinners, as well as "seducers, wax worse and worse." The dead become twice dead; the dry bones more dry. Every new act of sin casts up an additional impediment in our way of a return to virtue, and to God; until that which was once only a molehill swells into a mountain that nothing can remove, but the faith at whose bidding mountains are removed, and cast into the depths of the sea. Overcome of sin when it was weak, how could we hope to overcome sin when it is strong, but that faith, undaunted by difficulties, and calling to our aid Him with whom nothing is impossible, despairs of nothing—saying with Paul, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.

Yes—they that are accustomed to do evil may learn,

and have learned, to do well; the Ethiopian has changed his skin, and the leopard his spots. Down into that crimson fountain, and it is done! With the blood of Christ to wash away the darkest guilt, and the Spirit of God to sanctify the vilest, and strengthen the weakest nature, I despair of none. Too late! It is never too late. Even old age, tottering to the grave beneath the weight of seventy years, and a great load of guilt, may retrace its steps, and begin life anew. Hope falls like a sunbeam on the hoary head. I have seen the morning rise cold and gloomy, and the sky grow thicker, and the rain fall faster, as the hours wore on; yet, ere he set in night, the sun, bursting through the heavy clouds, has broke out to illumine the landscape, and shed a flood of glory on the dying day.

III. Shew how these difficulties are to be overcome.

The Spirit and the flesh, grace and nature, heavenly and earthly influences, are sometimes so fairly balanced, that like a ship with wind and tide acting on her with equal power, but in opposite directions, the believer makes no progress in the divine life. He loses headway. He does not become worse, but he grows no better; and it is all he can do to hold his own. Sometimes, indeed, he loses ground; falling into old sins. Temptation comes like a roaring sea squall, and, finding him asleep at his post, drives him backward on his course; and further now from heaven than once he was, he has to pray, Heal my backsliding, renew me graciously, love me freely—For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.

The state of the most advanced Christians is often very unsatisfactory. The affections that, true as the needle to the pole, should point steadily to heaven, go wheeling about like a weather vane, that shifts with shifting winds. Sinful thoughts and bad desires spring up, thick as weeds in showery weather—faster than we can cut them down; and every attempt to keep the heart pure, holy, heavenly, ends in miserable failure—extorting the question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" It is disheartening! We go into our gardens, and see the flowers growing into beauty by sunny day, and silent night; week by week of autumn, the fields around us assume a more golden tint, ripening for the harvest; and year by year, childhood in our homes rise into youth, and youth into bearded manhood;—but our poor souls seem standing still. There is no appreciable progress; and we begin to ask, Are we never to grow fit for heaven? Is our hope of it but a pious dream, a beautiful delusion? Daily called to contend with temptation, the battle often goes against us; in these passions, and tempers, and old habits, The sons of Zeruiah are too strong for us. Not that we do not fight. That startling cry, The Philistines are on thee, Samson! rouses us; we make some little fight; but too often resisting only to be conquered, we are ready to give up the struggle—saying, It is useless; and like Saul in Gilboa's battle, to throw away sword and shield. We would; but that, cheered by a voice from above, and sustained by hope in God's grace and mercy, we can turn to our souls to say, Why art thou cast down, my soul; why is my spirit dis-

quieted within me?—rise; resume thy arms; renew the combat; never surrender—Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

To encourage you, let me shew two cases—those of Peter and Abraham—where they who had been overcome by the lesser, overcame the greater trial; and, to use the language of my text, though wearied by the footmen, nobly and successfully contended with horses. No doubt we do not stand on the same platform with these distinguished saints; we are not Peter or Abraham. Still their God is our God for ever and ever—the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow; and what he did once, he can do again. His ear is not heavy that he cannot hear; nor his hand shortened that it cannot save.

1. Look at the case of Peter.

The arena where he is matched with footmen is a judgment hall. A woman—no proud Jezebel, plotting Naboth's murder; no Athaliah, ambitious in her grey hairs of a throne, and wading to the ancles in the blood of her children; no Herodias, gazing with grim satisfaction on John's gory head—has dragged the disciple to her presence; and fixing on him her malignant eye, asserts, Thou also art one of them! It is a humble maid, come perhaps to cast some billets on the fire; who without intending to hurt him, or without any object other than to satisfy her curiosity, catches a sight of Peter's face as the rising flame throws it ruddy glare on the crowd around, and says, Thou also art one of them! Coward! He denies it; denies his master; asseve-

rates with oaths, I know not the man. What a fall was there! He ran with the footmen, and they wearied him.

The scene changes; and as if Providence kindly intended that Peter should win back his laurels on the field where they were lost, the arena is again a place of judgment. He stands at the bar of stern, bloodthirsty judges. Far more severely tried, he is now equal to the occasion. His courage mounts with the danger, as the eagle with the violence of the storm. No denying of his master now! no repudiating now of his discipleship! They have got no sneaking coward, but a lion at bay. Accused, he turns the accuser; he charges these judges with murdering the Lord of glory; and boldly tells them that Jesus he has preached, and, let them do their worst, Jesus he will preach —obeying God rather than man. He had run with the footmen, and they had wearied him; see there how nobly he contends with horses!

2. Look at the case of Abraham.

We would touch the patriarch's fault lightly, but that he nobly redeemed it; and that, like the dark back-ground of a picture, it brings out the faith which shone so brilliant in his greatest trial. Woman's beauty has often been her snare; supplying food to vanity, and exposing her honour to the seducer's wiles. But Sarah's beauty was her husband's snare. About to sojourn in the land of Egypt, he looked on her face with alarm—not with pleasure now; saying to himself, These bright eyes shall be my death; throwing their witchery on the king, he will covet my treasure; to get

at this tempting fruit, as when axes are levelled against a stately palm, they will hew down the tree. Alarmed at such thoughts, frightened by a shadow, his fear of man got the better of his faith in God. As in other cases bringing a snare, it prompted, and his tongue taught this lie, at least mean shuffle and equivocation, to Sarah, Say thou art my sister; and it may be well with me for thy sake. He ran with the footmen, and they wearied him.

Look again; the scene has shifted. Once more he is on his trial. The arena is a mountain summit. He has to contend not with footmen, but with horses here. God has said, "Take thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest; and offer him for a burnt-offering on a mountain that I will tell thee of!" Offer Isaac! make a burnt-offering of my boy, my son, my only son; bind him to the horrid altar; and a father's hands to bind him! Never, in father's or mother's breast, was faith put to so great a trial. Contend with horses? He has to contend with passions stronger far than horses; with love strong as death, love that many waters cannot quench. A thousand devils whispered in his ear, Do it not! and nature, turning traitor to her God, rose in all her might to forbid the bloody deed; protesting that God could never, never demand such a barbarous sacrifice. Yet see him! He lays Isaac gently on the altar, and tenderly kisses him. He bandages his eyes. How his hand shakes as he turns the cord round his trembling limbs! His heart is like to break; yet, though turning away his head from the sight, he now takes the knife. Would God permit, he

would bury it up to the haft in his own bosom. Now look there—with an arm uplifted, but arrested from plunging it into Isaac's, on that mountain summit he stands on the highest pinnacle of faith that man ever stood on. In that grand and terrible spectacle see, God helping them, how those who have been wearied by the footmen may contend with horses!

"There were giants in those days," as is said of the men before the flood. No doubt. But it was God that made them strong; and all that Peter and Abraham did, they did through the power of his might. He strengthened them with all might by his Spirit in the inner man; and though these great actors have left the stage for lesser men to occupy, the might, the power remain. God remains; staying with his Church to make good these glorious promises, My grace is sufficient for thee—O worm Jacob, thou shalt thresh the mountains—One man shall chase a thousand—He that is feeble, not he that is strong, he that is feeble among them shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God—The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

With such promises, and with the assurance of his presence, may we not contend with horses; overcome the greatest difficulties; go down undaunted even into the swellings of Jordan? Great swellings these! There our sins assume a magnitude, and our guilt a blackness, and our salvation—out of Christ—a hopelessness, they wear nowhere else! The swellings of

Jordan! These are not the pains of parting, nor the pangs of dying, nor the mortal struggle, terrible as it seems; but guilty memories of the past that, like thunder clouds, rise fast, and thick, and black, and terrible on the soul, and the prospect of a judgment near, just, irrevocable, eternal. I have seen these cast a solemn shadow on the face of the holiest, as if the righteous were scarcely saved. And what shall we do in these swellings of Jordan? Do? What can we do, but cling to Jesus? Lay your sins on Jesus; cast your fears on Jesus; die with your head pillowed on his bosom; and, your last conscious gaze fixed on his cross, breathe out your mortal life in words like these—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
When the nearer waters roll,
When the tempest still is nigh.

"Hide me, O my Saviour! hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide;
Oh! receive my soul at last."

The Christian's Patience.

"I waited patiently for the Lord."—Psalm xli.

Patience, as it is not apathy, is not sluggishness, or indolence. There are circumstances which justify haste. For example, we do not walk, but rush out of a house on fire, or falling, a sudden ruin. If any one has been poisoned, or, having burst a blood-vessel, is bleeding to death, we do not go, we run for a physician; and, hardly taking time to tell our story, hurry him off to the scene of danger. Such impatience, if so it can be called, is even more required in the interests of the soul than of the body. Its case is far more urgent; its danger is very much greater: hours here may involve the loss of eternity—nay one moment too late, may be for ever too late.

Who waits most patiently on the Lord may be placed in circumstances where the more he believes he will be the busier; and the more he hopes, the more will he hurry. Woke at dead of night by a loud knocking at the door, and by Lot, with terror in his face, and quick speech on his tongue, crying, "Up; get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city," his sons-in-law lay still, and laughed the old man to scorn; thinking him mad—wrong in the head. At

any rate, they would wait a little ; it would be time enough to seek safety when they saw danger ; and thus, like many, they perished through unbelief. So almost did Lot ; like many also, better at giving advice than taking it ; administering wise counsel than practising it. And he had perished, but that the angels hurried the lingerer out of the city, crying, as God does to all sinners in the way of destruction, and to all saints in the way of temptation, Escape for thy life ; look not behind thee.

What a contrast to Lot with his defective faith and lingering steps, David, that day when he went to meet Goliath? Never were two antagonists more unequally matched—the one a giant, the other a mere youth ; the one accustomed to war, and crowned with its bloody laurels, the other familiar only with the quiet scenes of pastoral life ; the one sheathed from head to heel in polished mail, the other apparelled in a shepherd's dress ; the one shaking a spear shafted like a weaver's beam to send it whistling through the air, and stake its victim to the ground, the other with no weapon more formidable than a few smooth stones and a sling. Yet, and just because he had faith in God, David was in a sense impatient. Eager for battle, burning to redeem God's honour and wipe out this disgrace from the hosts of Israel, when the giant, incensed at what he took to be the stripling's insolence, stalked forth, David, we are told, ran to meet him.

Patient waiting for the Lord is quite consistent with boldness in design, and energy and promptitude in action ; and only inconsistent with those unbelieving,

impetuous, ungovernable, headlong, headstrong passions which breed impatience, and lead people to run before providence instead of waiting on it. Of this let me give you two examples.

I. By contrast illustrate what it is to wait on the Lord.

1. Look at the conduct of Abraham.

On his leaving Ur of the Chaldeans to wander a pilgrim in the land of Canaan, God had promised that he should become the father of a great nation. "Lift up thine eyes," he said to him one day, "and look northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward." And when Abraham had done it, swept the wide horizon from the hills of Moab beyond Jordan to the sea that lies gleaming in the bay of Carmel, and from the snows of Lebanon to the sands of the burning desert, "All the land," said the Lord, "thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee; and I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered: Arise and walk through the land, I will give it unto thee." Well, years elapse after that. Time rolls on, and effaces Sarah's beauty; writing wrinkles on both their brows. Old age has stolen on them, and their bed is childless. Where now the hope of seed like the dust of the earth? It is the privilege of faith to hope against hope. Abraham should have believed that he who formed a child in the Virgin's womb, and who, as Jesus said, could of the stones of the street raise up children to Abraham, would cause fruit to grow on the withered tree; and sooner change

the ordinary course of nature than fail of his word. But, at Sarah's suggestion, he formed an unhallowed alliance with an Egyptian ; thereby sowing dissension in his house, and setting an example to his descendants which the best of them were too prone to follow. Though the father of the faithful, in this he ran before providence, not waiting patiently on the Lord.

2. Look at the conduct of Rebekah.

"Two nations," said God to her, "are in thy womb ; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people ; and the elder shall serve the younger." She gave birth to twins ; and the boys grew up. Esau, the elder of the two, became his father's, and Jacob his mother's, favourite. She had God's promise that her favourite should inherit the blessing, and by the priority it gave, become the head of his father's house. But Rebekah could not see how this was to be. For Esau was his father's best-loved son. It was for him the blind man groped ; it was the manly voice and bounding step of the hunter lad, he listened for, and liked best to hear. The blinder and weaker the old man grows, he clings the more to Esau ; and the longer the current of his deep love runs, it cuts a deeper channel in his heart. How is Jacob to get the blessing? Forgetting that, though we cannot bend old trees like saplings, God can, and that he turns the hearts of men as he turneth the rivers of water, Rebekah becomes impatient ; and taking steps to anticipate God's time, lays her hand on the wheel of providence. Rash woman, she will hurry on the event. Dressing up her favourite like Esau, putting a lie into his mouth, teach-

ing him how to play the hypocrite, she sends Jacob in to wait on his poor old father; and that tent, where the blind man sat, became the scene of a crime which blasted for ever their domestic peace; dogged the heels of Jacob to his grave; left a deep stain on the good man's memory; planted sharp thorns in his pillow; and though forgiven of God, was terribly avenged that day when his own sons played him as foul a trick, and with the rent, bloody robe of Joseph before his eyes, he cried, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." Rebekah and he ran before providence; they did not wait patiently on the Lord.

II. Look at David's own example of waiting on the Lord.

It was impatience, springing from unbelief, which lost Saul his kingdom. A merchant in times of bad trade, or other trying circumstances, instead of trusting in God to bring him through his difficulties, or sustain him under them, has recourse to fraud; or a poor man, instead of trusting providence with the supply of his wants, and committing his children to the care of him who hears the young ravens cry, hard-pinched and pressed, puts out his hand to steal. And so, hard pressed by the Philistines, and wearied waiting for Samuel's return, that he might offer sacrifice, and take counsel of God, Saul did a forbidden thing. He assumed to himself the priestly office which, king as he was, he had no right or authority to do—in his impatience thus sinning against the Lord. The smoke of

the profane sacrifice offered by this rash, impetuous man, is still floating in a dun cloud up to heaven when the Prophet appears—and appears to say, as he points to the ashes and the altar, "Thou hast done foolishly: now thy kingdom shall not continue." Unhappy and unfortunate man! Saul, like many others who do not wait patiently on the Lord, in seeking to save his fortune, took the way to lose it.

Was he tempted to yield to impatience; how much more, and oftener, was his illustrious successor? On that day David was sent for and called from the flock to meet Samuel in his father's house, and wondering what they wanted with a lad like him, came in, shepherd's crook and pipe in hand, most unlike a future king, to receive on bended knee the royal and sacred oil from the prophet's hand, he knew that he was to be king. And though, when a fugitive for life, a beggar for bread, an exile from country, hunted like a wild beast from morass to mountain, from the crags to the caves in their bowels, his hope of ever reaching the throne seemed as faint as that of a vessel of ever reaching land that lies dismasted and waterlogged, a floating hulk with a starving crew, on the waves of a shoreless sea, yet David hoped in the Lord; and patiently waited God's way to put him in possession of the kingdom. Twice at least was Saul within his reach. Twice, when one blow of his hand would have settled the controversy, precipitated the event, and put him in immediate possession of the crown, he restrained himself—possessing his soul in patience. In that dark cave, where Saul little knew who stood

beside him, and could touch him, and could have killed him at a stroke ; and in that field also where the king slept, little dreaming who stood over him, and had only to give the sign, and the spear of Abishai, already raised, pinned him to the ground, David could say in truth, "I waited patiently for the Lord." Amply rewarded for years of enduring faith and hope, when the long looked-for day came that the nation called him to the throne, in him patience had her perfect work.

III. Consider how we are patiently to wait on God.

1. We are to wait patiently on providence in the common affairs of life.

To the neglect of this may be attributed not a few of the failures that happen in business. People are impatient to get on in life ; to acquire a competency ; to be rich. The slow but sure methods by which all great things are accomplished in the ordinary course of providence are too slow for them ; so they engage in rash and reckless schemes—building up a business with "untempered mortar," and without a solid foundation of capital. The result is, that when some shock, like an earthquake, shakes the commercial world, their fortunes topple over to bury the architect in their ruins.

I do not say that we are to neglect opportunities of rising in the world, and improving our circumstances. No. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich ;" and riches are good if they come in an honest and honourable way, giving us power to do good, to

glorify God, to serve Jesus, and to bless humanity. Not that I respect a man merely because he is rich—not unless he make a noble and pious use of riches. But, so far from encouraging indolence, religion fits and strengthens us for the ordinary business of life; and teaches us that God is honoured as well by one in the humblest employment, whose work is well done, as by others who may fill the most exalted stations; just as he is glorified by a glow-worm's lamp, as by a blazing sun, by the golden crocus or silver snow-drop, as by the tallest, gaudiest, proudest flowers of the garden.

We are to take, and do our part in life's common affairs. But the gospel which calls us to that, though it does not allow us to cast our work on God, encourages us to cast its cares on him. Cast thy burden on the Lord, for he will sustain it; and in ordinary circumstances it is not the work that is the burden. On the contrary, work is a blessing. The "burden," in other words the curse, of Sodom was "fulness of bread and abundance of idleness"—and acting on the elements of our depraved nature, like fire on gunpowder, that were enough to make a Sodom, or a Hell of any country under the sun. Be it what it may, God says, "Cast thy burden on the Lord and he will sustain it"—"Commit thy ways unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Waiting on him thus, we shall be armed with patience; and find faith in his providence to be a sevenfold shield against the cares that are the bane of other men's lives, and against temptations that lead many into sin.

For, between a worldling torn with anxieties, and tossed with fears, and a child of God who waits on providence, believing that God reigneth over all, there is such difference as there is between a brawling, foaming, roaring torrent that, rushing along its rugged channel, leaps with mad haste from crag to crag, and the placid river that, with heaven in its bosom, and beauty flowering on its banks, pursues a noiseless, peaceful, useful course onward to its parent sea. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes; for they that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion which cannot be moved. Wait thou on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord.

2. We are to wait patiently on God under the trials of life.

"Is not this David, the king of the land? Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Fame, like the sunshine which brings clouds of stinging insects from every foul ditch and rotting swamp, breeds envy, and sometimes also brings danger with it. So David found when these words of the men of Gath fell on his startled ear. There, under Achish its king, he had sought protection from Saul, and was much like the man in prophecy who fled from a bear, and a lion met him; leaned on a wall, and a serpent stung him. He had gone down into the den of the

very lioness that he had robbed of her cub; for Goliath, who had fallen before his sling, had been the pride of Gath; her greatest and most famous son. Was this an act of rashness or of faith? If the latter, bravely as David had put out to sea, when the storm comes, and the waves rise, and run mountains high, and he loses sight of God at the helm, how he trembles! He who went forth so magnanimously against Goliath, turns pale with fear before those who neither had the giant's stature, nor the giant's strength. Where is now the man, whose faith rising with the trial, once said, He that delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine! Where is the man who said, Though an host should encamp against me, yet will I not fear! There he is, letting his spittle fall on his beard, scrabbling on the doors of the gate, playing the madman; passing himself off for a fool! Was this a way for a man of God to seek safety in danger? He took his own way of getting out of the trial rather than wait patiently for God to deliver him; and what a contrast to his former self, or to the calm and lofty bearing of Daniel when he went down, like a hero, into the den of lions. He trusted in the Lord—in the time of trial he waited on his God; and was alive next day to send up this grand answer to the anxious king, My God hath sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me.

And who waits on God piously, prayerfully, patiently in their trials, shall have the same tale to tell; the same experience—he will shut the lions' mouths, that

they shall not hurt them. In the trials he sends or permits, God afflicts not willingly; and has no more pleasure in seeing his people suffer than a father in the tears of the boy he corrects; than a kind surgeon with bloody knife in his hand but tenderness in his heart, in his patient's groans. Believe that! And though to be brought to poverty, to suffer days of languor and wakeful nights, to sit weeping amid the ruins of your fondest domestic hopes, or shed tears of less bitter sorrow on the graves of your dead is not joyous but grievous—very grievous, yet believe that; Oh see God's hand in every thing, and believe that all things shall work together for your good, and you will learn to thank him for the bitter as well as for the sweet; for your crosses as well as for your comforts; for medicine as for meat; for the withering, biting, winter frosts that kill the weeds as for the dewy nights and sunny days that ripen the fields of corn. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but they that wait on the Lord shall want no good thing. Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

3. We are to wait patiently on God to complete our sanctification. We cannot be too earnest, too diligent to be sanctified; we cannot be too importunate, but we may be too impatient. Yielding to impatience, we may be cast down, and ready to abandon that hope which, inspiring courage into the soldier, contributes so much to win the fight; which sustains the workman

under his toil, the sailor on his watch, the mother by the sick bed, the most wretched in their misery, and in spiritual matters is both a prelude and a means of success. Consider that all great works are of slow progress; all God's works, with exceptional cases, both in nature and grace, certainly are so. So when we lapse into sin, fall back, make little perceptible progress, we should be grieved and sorry; but not cast down—as if God had abandoned either us, or his work of grace in our hearts. To the devil standing with his foot on us, we are not to yield ourselves captive, but say, Rejoice not over me, O mine enemy, for when I fall I shall rise again; and to our souls, we are to say with David, Why art thou cast down my soul, why is my spirit disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Why should the work of the Holy Spirit differ from God's other works? Minutes elapse between the dawn, and the day; days elapse between the opening bud, and the full blown flower; months elapse between spring's green blade, and autumn's golden corn; years elapse between feeble infancy, and stalwart manhood; centuries elapsed between the hope begotten in the heart of Eve, and the child born of Mary's womb; and long ages elapsed between the period when God laid the foundations of this world, and that when, passing up through many stages, it was completed, and, man standing on the apex of the mighty pyramid, God looked on all the works of his hands, and pronounced them to be very good.

Progress in sanctification may, in fact, be going on

when you do not see it; perhaps when it seems going back. Take comfort! "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." The river may appear flowing away from the sea, when, but turning round the base of some opposing hill, it is pursuing an onward course. The ship may appear to be standing away from the harbour, when, beating up in the face of adverse winds, she is only stretching off on the other tack, and at every tack making progress shoreward, though to others than seamen she seems to lose it. God works in strange, mysterious, silent, unnoticed ways. Silently and slowly the water rises that shall one day on a sudden burst the dyke, and sweep away the obstacles that bar its onward path. Unseen, and unnoticed the rains wash away the ground below the stone that shall one day, on a sudden leap from its seat, and roll to the bottom of the hill. Quietly, and slowly the root grows in the fissure that shall one day on a sudden split the rock, and reveal its long-continued, silent, secret, but mighty power. In a deep, growing sense of the evil of sin, produced perhaps by our very fall; in deeper humility, in a low view of ourselves, in greater self-abasement; in a more entire dependence on Christ for righteousness, and on the Holy Spirit for the work of grace; in feelings that fill us with pain and regret, and godly sorrow, making us eat our passover with bitter herbs, the work of sanctification may be going on. Like a patient who, through the power of returning life, begins to feel and complain of his pains, when we think we are growing worse we may actually be growing better, and making no little progress when we seem

to be making none. Be not cast down! Progression is the ordinary law of God's government. It is star by star that the hosts of night march out; it is minute by minute that morn's grey dawn brightens up into perfect day; it is ring by ring that the oak grows into the monarch of the forest; it is inch by inch, and foot by foot that the tide, which bears navies on its bosom, comes creeping in on the shore. And, not like justification an act, our sanctification being a work of God's free grace, is under the same law of progress. More or less rapid, it is a thing of steps and stages. Therefore, while praying earnestly, and working diligently, live hopefully and wait patiently. He will perfect that which concerneth us; and one day bring forth the headstone with "shoutings of grace, grace unto it."

The Christian's Life.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" — Acts ix. 6.

The darkest scenes of our Lord's history, like a cloud with the moon behind it, shine with a silver lining. For example, he was born in a stable, where, as his dying head was pillowed on thorns, his infant head was pillowed on straw; but then, angels announced the event. Way-worn and weary, he sat on Jacob's well to beg of a Samaritan a drink of water; but then, he told the astonished woman all her history, and, reading her heart, sent her away on flying feet to cry, Come, see a man who has told me all things that I have ever done. The tumbling sea, the rolling boat, the howling wind, the sheets of spray, could not wake him, so worn out his frame and deep his slumbers; but when he was awakened and rose up, ah, then, "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee;" he said but the word— and moon, and stars, and boat, and girdling mountains lay mirrored on a placid lake. At the grave of Lazarus, groaning like a man and weeping like a woman, he was overcome of grief; but then, he overcame death there. He stood betrayed in the garden, sold by a base disciple for thirty pieces of silver; but then, there

came a hand out of the darkness that dealt his enemies a blow which sent them staggering, prostrate to the ground.

Thus, amid the deepest meanness, there was a touch of majesty; and his sun set, as it rose, in glory. He died, but who ever died as he? He closed his life amid acts of Godhead; pronouncing pardon with lips pale in death, and with a hand nailed to the cross opening heaven to a penitent thief. Thus his glory, like lightening, shone brighter in the depths of night than in the glare of day. By that, his last, noblest act, we are kept from despair. How has it sent us away to bend over the dying, and, when eyes were glazed, and lips were speechless, to pour into the ear of an expiring profligate, mercy for the chief of sinners! The case of the thief—most illustrious example of the freeness of the grace of God—teaches us to despair nowhere, and of none. I fancy there is no man in this house of a right mind, but breathes freer as he reads it. Brightest trophy of sovereign mercy, and of power omnipotent to save, that thief has led the way of thousands to the gate of heaven; and happy the man that goes in there by the merits of a crucified Saviour, though he goes in at the back of a crucified thief!

As illustrious as that case, is the conversion related in this passage. Since this, in the sudden arrest and conversion of Saul, is as demonstrative of the power, as that is of the freeness of the grace of God. Standing on a platform when the train, shooting out of some dark tunnel, dashes by with the rush of an eagle, and

the roar of thunder; or, seated upon some lofty rock, when the mountain wave, driven on by the hurricane, and swelling, foaming, curling, bursts, and, passing on either side, rushes to roar along the beach—than these I know no situation, under heaven, where a man more feels his weakness. What hand could stop these flying wheels; or, seizing the billow by its snowy mane, hold it back? Only one—God's own right hand. Great miracle that! A greater is here, in the sudden, instant, omnipotent arrest of Saul. With what impetus he moved on his career; leaving Christ's other enemies lagging, far behind. A young man, yet stopping at no half measures, but going right at the work of blood, he had already made his name a terror to the whole Church. Dead to pity, nor mother's tears, nor infant's cries could move him. A tiger that has tasted blood, he has set out one day anew; and, breathing flames and slaughter against the saints, is rushing on his prey. In a moment, on a sudden, he is arrested in mid-career, changed into a little child; the lion becomes a lamb; the leopard lies down beside the kid. Saul of Tarsus is another man. The hand that bent the arch of heaven has bent his iron will; and, now yielding himself up to Christ, he lies at his feet to say in words, to which I would direct your attention in the hope that God will bend also every stubborn sinner to adopt the language, "Lord"—my God, my Saviour, my sovereign, my all in all—"what wilt thou have me to do?" Before turning your attention to this question I would remark—

I. All men require to undergo the change that was wrought on Saul of Tarsus.

Did you ever see a dead child laid out by tender hands, or even sculptured in cold marble? With its air of calm repose, how beautiful it looks! Here death seems divested of his terrors. It looks so living—I had almost said angel-like—that it needs, as it were, but that we should touch it, or speak, to wake it up; and wake again the voice that often cheered a mother's heart, and woke her from happy slumbers. It is hard to believe that the child is dead; yet there is something harder to believe. With no bad passions stamped on its open brow, an infant looks so guiltless, and is so guileless; looks so innocent, and is so ignorant of evil—that kneeling at a mother's feet, with sunbeams falling on its golden locks, its little hands held up to heaven, its lips lisping a simple prayer, it is hard, a very hard thing, to believe that this creature is dead in sin; and that, as storms lie sleeping in the calm bosom of the deep, and thunder and lightning in the clear blue heavens, a thousand crimes are sleeping in that infant bosom. Yet so it is. It is dead in sin! and so are we all—"death has passed on all men, because all have sinned."

If so, you may say, how useless to speak to sinners! Who speaks to the dead? It seems, in that case, as useless to address unconverted men, as it were for me to go and take my stand in a churchyard, and, turning a grave-stone into a pulpit, address myself to the hollow skulls and mouldering bones around; and in that case preaching seems as mad as a mother's cries when

she hangs over the dead, and, calling her boy by name, implores him to speak to her. Yet, "I am not mad, most noble Festus." Not mad—no! Have not I seen life spring up under almost as unlikely circumstances? No longer ago than last winter, when the ground lay covered with lingering snows, and the earth lay bare, cold, and wan, like a shrouded corpse, there came a sudden thaw, to reveal what it was most curious and wonderful to see—a plant, fair herald of the spring, had risen up, and leafed, and blown out into full beauty, beneath its snowy crust. Is God less omnipotent in one kingdom than another? My trust is in him who has wrought greater wonders in the realms of grace than in the fields of nature.

True, I am no Christ to repair to the grave, saying, Lazarus, come forth! or go to churchyards with voice as mighty to awake the dead as the dormant. Still, I do not stand here like the king of Israel, when, with the letter in his trembling hand, he looked on the loathsome leper to exclaim, Am I a god, to kill and make alive, that this man is sent to me to be cured of his leprosy? Peter was no "god, to kill or make alive," yet he entered the lonely chamber; walked up to the pale, dead body; knelt by its side; looked on the fixed and filmy eyes; took the cold hand of Dorcas into his own, and saying, "Damsel, arise!" repeated the miracle of Bethany. Was such power imparted by God to a human voice? then why should I, who am called to speak to dead souls, have less faith than another man, as weak, as fallible, as mortal, who is called to speak to a dead body? God can give you

life though you were dead—dead as a grinning skull. Therefore I preach in the name of him whose heart is love, and whose word is life; who saith, and it is done; who commandeth, and it standeth fast. "Repent," therefore, "and be converted, every one of you." Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Awake, thou that sleepest, and call on thy God! Awake to salvation; time is pressing. Awake to prayer; the door is shutting. Awake to work; the night is falling. Awake to flee; the treacherous tide is creeping round and round you. Awake to believe! who does not, is damned; who does, is saved.

II. Consider what is implied in this question, which every true Christian will be ready to repeat—Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

1. It implies that every true convert submits himself to the will of Christ. It is not, What will my minister or elders, my parents or family, my neighbours or friends, the wife of my bosom, or children of my heart—but what wilt *thou* have me to do? This submission to another's will is the most difficult of things. It is easier, indeed, to bend iron, when it is cold, than a stubborn will; and I will bring you a thousand people in the world who will sooner give up their money than their will to others. Does not every parent in imparting to his child what is the best part of its education, find that to be the most difficult thing he has to do? I say the best part of education. That is not learned at schools, nor found in books; it does not lie in Latin, Greek, or philosophy; it is not communi-

cated by teachers. The boy gets it, or should get it, at home. The best teacher is the parent; and the best lesson he can impart to his children—the best learning he can give them, something far better than the largest fortune, is to take them, one by one, and break the backbone of their self-will. That lies at the foundation of a well-doing family, and makes a happy home; for as one God makes a harmonious universe, so one ruler makes a happy house.

Happy are the children who have early learned the self-denial that, saying No, turns a deaf ear to the syren's song; withdraws its eyes from viewing vanity; and putting its foot on temptation, crushes out the spark. This is to command fortune, and secure success in life. And happy are the children that, early trained in this virtue, have learned to say to a wise, good, Christian father, what Jesus said to his—"Father, not my will, but thine be done." This submission to the will of another, the first, best lesson, the battle of the nursery, trains us for the battle of the world, and also the Church. And thus are we to yield our wills to Christ, not saying what would I wish, this one will, or that one say, but What wilt *thou* have me to do? Say, and I'll do it, though I should die for it. Give the word. Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.—In the church, in the place of business, in the family, in the world, What wilt thou have me to do? Henceforth, my will be dead. May I have none but thine!

There is a memorable passage in the history of St. Francis that may throw light on this subject. The

grand rule of the order which he founded, was implicit submission to the superior. Well, one day a monk proved refractory. He must be subdued. By order of St. Francis, a grave was dug deep enough to hold a man; the monk was put into it; the brothers began to shovel in the earth; while their superior, standing by, looked on, stern as death. When the mould had reached the wretch's knees, St. Francis bent down, and, fixing his eye on him, said, Are you dead yet—is your self-will dead—do you yield? There was no answer; down in that grave there seemed to stand a man with a will as iron as his own. The signal was given, and the burial went on. When at length he was buried up to the middle, to the neck, to the lips, St. Francis bent down once more to repeat the question, Are you dead yet? The monk lifted his eye to his superior to see in the cold, grey eyes that were fixed on him no spark of human feeling. Dead to pity, and all the weaknesses of humanity, St. Francis stood ready to give the signal that should finish the burial. It was not needed; the iron bent; he was vanquished; the funeral was stopped; his will yielding to a stronger, the poor brother said, "I am dead."

It has been said that Popery is not so much a contradiction as a denial of the truth; or a caricature of it. It is true. I would not be dead as these monks to any man. The mind and reason which I have got from God Almighty are to bend implicitly and blindly before no human authority. But the submission I refuse to man, Jesus, I give to thee—not wrung from me by terror, but won by love; the result not of fear. but of

gratitude. I wish to be dead, not as that monk, but as he who said, I am dead; "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Saul, the persecuter, was dead; but Paul, the great Apostle, lived. Yet not I, he adds, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Were it so with us, had we no will of our own, what happy, good, brave, devoted Christians we should be! I have seen a servant come in the morning to his master for orders, and leave to spend the day in executing them; and would every man and woman in this house go morning by morning to Christ, saying, with Saul, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do this day? there would be no difficulty in getting any amount of money for Christ's cause; any number of people to do his work, or to make the utmost sacrifices for his cause. Stewards, however thrifty and niggard of their own, do not grudge to pay away their master's money; and if I, and you, looked on our gold and silver as Christ's we should never hesitate to part with it for him. I have heard the plough boy whistling in the furrow, and the milk-maid singing at her pail; and, happy as the larks that fill the blue skies above them with their ringing carols, they never fretted because they had to spend the live-long day in their master's service: nor would we to spend the day, the night, years, our lives, for Christ, did we but feel ourselves to be his servants.

I have read with admiration how a troop of cavalry, dashing at the roaring cannon, would rush on to death; and how the forlorn-hope would throw them-

selves, with a bound and a cheer, into the fiery breach, knowing that should they leave their bodies there—it was the will of their commander. Shall they do that, obedient, amid the shell and shot of battle, to the will of an earthly leader ; and shall Christians do less for Christ? Are you your own? body or soul, your own? is anything you call yours, your own? We have one Master in heaven ; and if it be true that he bought us with his blood ; bought us with his tears ; bought us with his thorny crown ; bought us with the agonies of Calvary—in the name of God, and truth, and heaven, what right has a Christian to himself? What Christian man or woman should not be ready to say, with this blessed, happy convert—I have done with myself ; I no longer live : Jesus, I have no will but thine! Lord, say what am I to do, and I will do it ; and, taking up my cross, follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God ; nought but death—nay, thanks be to God, not death—nothing henceforth shall part me and thee.

2. This question implies that every true convert feels his individual responsibility. It is not only, Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do? but reading the question otherwise, Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?

In looking over some vast assembly, with its sea of human faces, one reflection naturally suggests itself—in a few years they shall be all mouldering in the dust. There is another and yet more solemn thought ;—our

minds are carried forward to that day when the graves of a thousand generations, having given up their dead, all eyes, instead of being turned on a poor mortal man, shall, some beaming with joy and others black with despair, be fixed on the great white throne, and him that sits crowned thereon. But there is a third thought that presses on me whenever I cast my eyes over some such great assembly, and see all these human faces; it is this,—What power is here! What an immense moral power!

You may smile at him who stood by the cataract of Niagara as, gathering her waters from a hundred lakes, she rolled them over with the roar of a hundred thunders; and who, instead of being filled with a sublime admiration of the scene, began to calculate how much machinery that water-power would turn. You may smile at that utilitarianism. But it is a serious, solemn, stirring thought to think how much moral machinery all this power now before me could turn for good, were every scheming brain, and busy hand, and willing heart, engaged in the service of God. I hope many of you are active, zealous Christians. But were all of us so,—were all Christian men and women so, what honor would accrue to God! what a revenue of glory to Jesus Christ, and what invaluable service to religion! Thousands on thousands might be saved!

It is impossible to over-estimate, or rather to estimate the power that lies latent in our churches. We talk of the power latent in steam—latent till Watt evoked its spirit from the waters, and set the giant to turn the iron arms of the machinery. We

talk of the powers that was latent in the skies till science climbed their heights, and, seizing the spirit of the thunder, chained it to our surface—abolishing distance ; outstripping the wings of time ; and flashing our thoughts across rolling seas to distant continents. Yet what are these to the moral power that lies asleep in the congregations of our country, and of the Christian world? And why latent? Because men and women neither appreciate their individual influence, nor estimate aright their own individual responsibilities. They cannot do everything ; therefore, they do nothing. They cannot blaze like a star ; and, therefore, they won't shine like a glow-worm ; and so they are content that the few work, and that the many look on. Not thus are the woods clothed in green, but by every little leaf expanding its own form. Nor thus that fields are covered with golden corn, but by every stalk of grain ripening its own head. Nor thus does the coral reef rise from the depths of ocean, but by every little insect building its own rocky cell.

You say, what can I do? oh, I have no power, nor influence, nor name, nor talents, nor money! Look at the coral reef, yonder, where it encircles the fair isles that lie like bright gems on the bosom of the Pacific ; or, by Australian shores, stretches its unbroken wall for a thousand leagues along the sea. How contemptible the architects ; yet the aggregate of their labours, mocking our greatest breakwaters, how colossal! So it ought to be, and would be, in our congregations, were every man and every woman to feel

their own individual responsibilities; would each go to Christ, saying, Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?—would they but rise to the height of their calling. I know that all cannot be bright and burning lights; that honour is reserved for John Baptist and a few such men. But see how that candle in a cottage window sends out its rays streaming, far through the depths of night. Why should not we shine, though but like that?—shine, though it should be to illumine only the narrow walls of our country's humblest home.

Consider how the greatest things ever done on earth, have been done by little and little—little agents, little persons, and little things. How was the wall restored around Jerusalem? By each man, whether his house was an old palace or the rudest cabin, building the breach before his own door. How was the soil of the New World redeemed from gloomy forests? By each sturdy emigrant cultivating the patch round his own log cabin. How have the greatest battles been won? Not by the generals, who got their breasts blazoned with stars, and their brows crowned with honours; but by the rank and file—every man holding his own post, and ready to die on the battle-field. They won the victory! It was achieved by the blood and courage of the many; and I say, if the world is ever to be conquered for our Lord, it is not by ministers, nor by office-bearers, nor by the great, the noble, and mighty; but by every man and woman, every member of Christ's body, being a working member; doing their own work; filling their own

sphere; holding their own post; and saying to Jesus, Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do? And, indeed, when all is done, I venture to say of the busiest man that, when he lies on a dying bed, and grim death stands over him, his won't be the pleasant reflection, How much have I done? but rather the regretful thought, How much have I left undone? how many more sinners might I have warned; how many more wretched might I have blessed; how many more naked might I have clothed; how many more poor might I have fed; how many in hell may be cursing my want of faithfulness; how few in heaven are blessing God for my Christian, kind fidelity! Ah, the best of us will be thankful to be taken to glory, not as profitable servants, but as sinners saved.

3. It implies that the life of the true convert will be one of deeds.

It is not only, Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do; and Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do; but this also, Lord, what wilt thou have me to *do?* to do; not, observe and mark, to believe or to profess, but to *do*.

I do not stand here to set deeds against doctrines, or to exalt the one at the expense of the other. Nor have I any sympathy with the fashion, so common now-a-days, of setting small value on creeds; saying, It matters little what a man believes, if he does right. A man cannot do right unless he believes right. The thing is impossible, and as contrary to true philosophy as religion, since every effect must have a cause, and every stream a spring; nor can water rise above its

fountain, and according to the character of the foun tain, so will be that of the water it discharges. I know as well as others that doctrines are not deeds; that dogmas are not lives; that the foundation is not the superstructure. Yet that night when the rains descend, and the floods rise, and the winds blow, happy is the man whose storm-beaten house stands founded on a rock; he may go to bed amid the wild uproar of elements, and sleep in peace; and happy, happier still, the man, when the hour comes which shall sweep away all confidence in human merits, whose hopes of salvation stand on the Rock of Ages, secure on the work and death of Christ.

Calls creeds, as some do, mere skeletons; and doctrines and dogmas but the bones, and not the living, lovely, breathing form of true religion. Still I turn round to ask, What were the body without the bones? are not these an essential part of the animal system; maintaining our form erect, imparting to it its symmetry, giving these feet their power to walk, these hands their power to work? Not less important the place that doctrines hold, the part they play; and therefore I say, hold fast the profession of your faith; stand fast in the truth; be steadfast, immovable, valiant for the truth; be charitable and courteous, yet earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Still faith without works is dead; dead, in the judgment of an apostle; worse than dead, an offence; a cause of disgust like a dead body, stinking in the nostrils of the church and even of the world. Of what use is faith without works: doctrine without deeds?

Of no more use than trees without fruit, or clouds without water. Useless the creeds that do not influence our conduct; the preaching that leads to no practice; the Sabbath that impart no impulse heavenward which extends along the running week, nor by the rest of the seventh day brace us up for the toils of the six. Prayer meetings, sermons, religious services, are good; but they are not, as some make them, banquets where you are to enjoy yourselves and gratify your taste—like a man who sits down at a sumptuous feast to please his palate, and fill his belly. This is not to use but to abuse them. Would you see their proper use? Look at yon hardy and sun-burned man, sitting down in his cottage to a simple meal; and rising from the table to spend the strength it gives him at the plough, the spade, the labours of the field. So Sabbaths with their sermons, week-days with their occasional religious services, are to strengthen us for work—otherwise our religion is no less selfish than the lives of thousands, gourmands and epicures, who eat and drink for no higher purpose than their own pleasure. Our object should be to get strength to do God's work in this world; and to follow, at however great a distance, the steps of Him who, as our pattern as well as propitiation, went about continually doing good. I am sure that Christ is the propitiation of none of whom he is not also the pattern; and that on the last great day you shall never be asked what church you attended? to what denomination you belonged? what was your confession or creed? No! It is fruit, not leaves nor even flowers, that is the test of the tree. Every tree

that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.

Alive to this, what good we should do! how busy we should be! There would be no time for sin; little even for rest. Rest? We have often thought we should like a time of rest, ere leaving this busy world —a quiet corner, in the decline of life, like the straw or twig that, after being tossed about in the roaring torrent, floats aside into a smooth and placid pool, to sail round and round in seeming, serene enjoyment. But rest! what have we to do with that? From his cradle to the grave, did Christ ever rest? Does God ever rest? "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said our Lord. If you must have rest, wait a little while: your weary body will find it in the grave, and your spirit in yon blessed skies. Earth for work, heaven for wages—this life for the battle, another for the crown—time for employment, eternity for enjoyment. "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." Rise then to the duties and dignity of your Christian calling! Let every man and woman, I and you, the humblest of you, feel that they have a mission, a great mission on earth. Till then let us work at our mission; seeking to make this wretched world better than we found it, and, in good and holy works, to leave our "footprints on the sands of time."

Are you saved yourself? seated above the boiling sea, safe on the Rock of Ages? Then reach down your hand to pull up this, and that other drowning wretch. I would rather see a man, with eager eye and outstretched arm, bending down to draw others up on

the rock, than see him on his knees thanking God for his own escape and safety—the one were more God's work than the other. Christian men and women! the misery of this world, the sorrows you can heal, the wretchedness you can relieve, the habits you can improve, the wrongs you can redress, the happiness you can bestow, the souls you can save, call you to work.

And what the love of Christ requires, and the Bible enjoins, its revelations of the future encourage us to do. Grand prophecies wait fulfilment. The world's best days are yet to come. Whether we help it on or not, the time approaches when eager crowds shall throng the gates of mercy, and sinners shall flee to their Saviour like doves to their windows—and not politically only but spiritually, nations shall be born in a day—and converts be numerous in this island, and over all the world, as the dews that from the womb of the morning top every spike of grass, and hang, like pendant diamonds, sparkling on every branch. Lend your prayers, your money, your time, your help in every form to that glorious cause. Go, work: work for the God that loved you; work for the Saviour that bled for you; work for the world that, sinking, appeals to you for help—your motto "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

The Christian's Death.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."—Rev. xiv. 13.

The plateau, or raised ocean bed, which stretches across the Atlantic between Great Britain and America, and along which they laid the lines that were to unite two worlds together, and flash our messages over the bed of the sea, is covered, to some depth, with a fine impalpable powder. To the naked eye, when brought up from the depths of the sea and dried, it looks like dust; mere dust, devoid alike of beauty, and organization. But under the microscope how it changes! It is a cabinet of the most beautiful shells; each of them once the habitation of a creature exceedingly minute. Their home was in the upper regions of the sea; and when they died, their shells became their coffins, and, sinking many thousand fathoms down, they found a grave in the ocean bed. It has taken the dust and burial of many generations to raise the mould on the walls of that old, sacred ruin, around which the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep; but how many ages must have elapsed before the coffins and corpses of creatures so exceedingly small, could have raised the broad bed of ocean? To account for this phenomenon it is necessary to suppose that these animalculæ are

falling in showers, by night and day, through summer, winter, seed-time, and harvest; dropping down into their graves in numbers many as the drops of summer rain, or the snow-flakes of a winter storm. If so, how great the profusion of life in the vast ocean!

This is one of the last, and not the least interesting of the evidences that go to prove how this world teems with life. You find these indeed everywhere. Turn where you may, you meet with life in some one of its many forms. Not detected by the naked eye, but wisely, kindly concealed from it, you devour it in every morsel; you inhale it in every breath; you drink it in the cup filled at the mountain spring; you bathe in it among the billows of the briny ocean. Walking wild moor, or shaggy mountain, or flowery meadow, at every step your foot goes down on life. It sleeps the winter through in every bud; opens in every flower-bud; dances and quivers in every leaf; and rises before you in every spike of grass. Where is life not? More changeful than the fabled Proteus, it assumes innumerable shapes. There it cleaves the air on feathery wing; there cleaves the deep with fins; there crawls forth in the slimy worm; and there stands before you in the majesty of the human form. Here it breathes in vile corruption; and there plays and dances in the pure light of sunbeams. Water cannot drown it. Earth cannot bury it. Open the secrets of the grave —for a moment—life is there; penetrating the domain of death, it seizes on the lifeless body, and takes possession of the tomb. We can say to it what David said to its great Giver, "Whither shall I flee from thy

presence? Thou hast beset me behind and before. Thou compassest my path."

Common as life is, death, its counterpart, though less apparent, is not less common. As if it were the shadow which life casts upon the ground, there, along with it, goes that dark, unsocial, dumb companion. For though not coeval, death is co-existent with life; so that wherever you find the one in this world, you find the other. Is it not the fate of all that lives to die? We forget this. Some like, and try to forget it; and, indeed, all of us are too prone to do so, turning to an irreligious use that beautiful, and kind, and beneficial arrangement, whereby God, for death is not lovely, provides that the evidences of it shall not long remain to disfigure this fair creation. You may walk a whole day in the crowded city, nor once meet a nodding hearse, or poverty's plainest funeral. I have walked down a long summer day across moor, mountain, and woodland, nor seen a sign of death. No shriek of pain, nor groan of agony, disturbed the melody of nature; and where the merry cricket chirped among the grass, and the lark sang in bright skies, and cattle lowed in fragrant pastures, and its silver tenants leaped and played in the stream, and flowers with their ten thousand golden censers offered up odours of praise to God, and all nature rejoiced and revelled in the possession of life, no withering skeleton crumbled beneath my feet. No sign of death was there. As if God had not only no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but no pleasure in the death of any creature, its evidences, the footsteps of this fell destroyer, are speedily effaced. Let

bird or beast fall, and curious creatures come creeping forth to do the sexton's office; the denizens of air and earth seize on the lifeless body; so that if death is quick to seize on life, life is no less quick to seize on death — nature covering with a green and flowery shroud all that moulders and decays; changing foul corruption into beauty, and the lifeless corpse of one creature into the pregnant womb of ten thousand lives! Yet though life is thus a far more apparent thing than death, the one is as common as the other. The fate of all that your eye looks on, is to die. You never see a flower to admire its beauty, but it shall die. In the Crystal Palace, in the trunk of a mighty pine, stands the noblest specimen of the vegetable world that man has looked on, or that has fallen to his hand. Towering more than three hundred feet above the ground, it had seen three times three hundred years, ere the forest resounded to its groans, and the axe of the woodman had laid its head in the dust. Still, in these blows, man but anticipated the hand of time. Before his scythe all things go down. There is not a tree that grows, nor a bird that sings, nor a flower that blooms, nor a child that laughs, nor a man that toils, nor anything that lives, but is doomed to die.

The penalty of sin, bitter fruit of man's unsanctified ambition, death hangs over all of us. Ten, twenty, fifty years after this where shall we be? A few brief years, and not this or that congregation only shall be changed, but this great city shall have changed all its tenants. There is no familiar face you meet on your way to church or market, shall be seen then. The

Sabbath bells will ring out from city steeples, but they shall be rung by other hands, and rung for other worshippers; pulpits shall be filled by other preachers, and the pews by other worshippers. We go the way of all the living. A few years more, and all these animated, breathing forms, shall lie still and cold in death, mouldering in the silent grave. What says the apostle? "Death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Yet we say with John, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.

Before shewing that death, by grace, is changed into a blessing, let me observe—

I. Death is a curse.

My text, no doubt, says, "Blessed are the dead," still death is a curse. Who has read the poetry of Milton but knows that, with a poet's license, he represents Death as the son of the Devil, begotten in the womb of Sin. He pictures Satan, on his flight to our world, as encountering two strange and terrible objects at the gates of hell:—

"Before the gates there sat
On either side a formidable shape;
The one seemed woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold
Voluminous and vast; a serpent armed
With mortal sting. The other shape,
If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguished in member, joint or limb;
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either; black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart. What seemed his head,
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

Sin, the half lovely woman, half scaly reptile, who as porteress guarded the gates of hell, thus explains to to Satan the name and history of the other crowned and armed monster :—

> "Pensive here I sat
> Alone; but long I sat not, till my womb
> Pregnant by thee, and now excessive grown,
> Prodigious motion felt and rueful throes.
> At last this odious offspring whom thou seest,
> Thine own begotten, breaking violent away,
> Tore through my entrails, that with fear and pain
> Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew
> Transformed; but he my inbred enemy
> Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,
> Made to destroy. I fled, and cried out, Death!
> Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sighed
> From all her caves, and back resounded Death!"

In that picture Milton embodies a very common notion, and common error. For many people fancy that there was no death till there was sin in the world; and misunderstanding the apostle's observation "death by sin"—which applies only to man—they extend it out and beyond him; making it embrace the whole of this world's creation. In regard to the lower animals, as well as to man, they believe there never was death till there was sin; and that by sin, man's sin, came death on them. Now, no person of common intelligence can open a shark's mouth and look at those rows of tremendous teeth, can look at the broad paw and claws of the lion, can examine the talons of an eagle, or the beautiful mechanism of a serpent's fang, with its poison-bag, and the groove by which the

fatal drop enters into the wound—but he must see that death, in point of time, preceded sin. Unless these animals, which were before man, were made for the very purpose of living by killing, why were they armed with such instruments of destruction? In the original plan of the divine government, God evidently took death into his arrangements; laid his account with death; provided for it, planned for it—death as much as life being one of his purposes, and forming an essential part of his plan in the government of the world.

It is not expressly stated in the Bible that there was death before sin; but though I do not find that in God's word, I find it in what is as good. I read it plainly written in God's works. I have the testimony of the Bible to this, that "death reigned from Adam to Moses;" but although I have not the same testimony to this, that death, which reigned long before Moses, reigned long before Adam too, I have what is equally divine—the testimony of the rocks. It is written there on tables of stone, in letters legible as those which Moses brought with him from the mount. On turning over these stony leaves of Natural Revelation, we read of death that was, long before Adam was; we find its evidence in the remains of monstrous creatures that, armed with tremendous powers of destruction, turned this world into a vast scene of battle and of death, long before Eden bloomed; and whose bones were entombed in the rocks, where the convulsions of nature buried them, long ages before Adam was made. Why there should be death when there was no sin, is a difficulty I cannot solve. I do not

pretend to give the question a satisfactory answer. It is a mystery. But so are many things else. It is a mystery why the dumb creatures should cry, and howl, and groan, under sufferings that often move our pity. It is a mystery to me why a benignant and benevolent God, that could have no pleasure in the pain of any creature, inflicted it on an innocent creation. And it is a mystery, perhaps, even to the intellects of angels, why that should suffer which never sinned. Still we can perceive a manifest difference between the death of these creatures and that of man. It is when death extends its ravages to him that it rises into a curse. "The sting of death is sin." That has armed his dart.

The lower creatures die, but with how little pain! in what happy ignorance! Death springs on them with a tiger's leap. The coming event casts no shadow before. I have seen a lamb go gambolling on its way to the slaughter-house, cropping the wayside flowers. No vision of the butcher and his axe disturbs the ox, as he browses contented in abundant pastures. See this pale mother, her brow clouded with care as she trims the lamp by the cradle of her withering child! She is to be pitied. But no fear dashes the joy of yon mother bird that embraces her nestlings in her wings; or, seated on the bending spray on a sweet summer eve, sings her young to sleep. The prospect of death never alarms either beast or bird. The groans of a dying steed do not disturb the feast of his fellow in the neighbouring stall. The dead body of their own kindred never suggests the idea that

they also are to die; and fills them with dread of their approaching fate. Thus, there is no curse, so to speak, in their death; no dread hereafter. Happy creatures! they enjoy life unembittered by the fear of losing it; and when it is lost, they part with it in most instances with very little pain; sometimes with none at all.

It is otherwise with us. The bravest men are afraid of death; and true bravery lies not in insensibility to its terrors, but in facing what we fear. It is an easy thing for a soldier, amid the whirl and excitement of a battle-field, to dash on the serried bayonets; but shew me the man, unless a true, lofty, strong-minded Christian, who will, calmly, and coolly, and undauntedly, meet his dying hour. Ah! this fate, from which nature shrinks with instinctive horror, tries the courage of the bravest, and the piety of the best of men. The great mass of mankind are undeniably afraid to meet death; to stand face to face, and front to front, with the King of Terrors. Afraid to meet him? they are afraid even to think of him! Trembling to hear his hand knocking at a neighbour's door, they take alarm, and are ready to fly at his approach. They do not quarrel with grey hairs so much because they spoil their beauty, as because, like the snow powdered on mountain heights that proclaims the approach of winter, they are the unwelcome heralds of death and a grave. And why are thousands in this world, perhaps some of us, happy? The secret of your gay and light-hearted humour is this—you are hopeful that you will not die to day; no, nor to-morrow; nor next week;

nor for another year. Talk of the ills of poverty, exile, disease, calumny; evils of human life as they are, they all make way for death. Trampling under his feet kingly crowns and dear-bought laurels, flowering hopes and loving, bleeding hearts—he marches at the head of all human ills—crowned, by the universal consent of mankind, the King of Terrors. "Skin for skin," said the devil—and for once the father of liars spake the truth—"Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Yes. Let men brave death as they may, or rather may pretend to do, it is an awful curse. A doom to all but Christian faith intolerable, it admits no true comfort, but the hope of salvation by the blood of Christ. Have you that? Happy are you! I congratulate you. Though you were a beggar, happy are you! If you have it not, I would not change places with you; not for a thousand worlds.

Separate and apart from the consolations of Christian faith, death is a tremendous evil. Nature shrinks from it, shuddering. I do not like to think of being a cold, pale, inanimate form of clay, unconscious of the love and grief of all around me; screwed down into a narrow coffin; borne away from my cheerful home; and when the green sod has been beaten down above me, left, not by enemies, but by those I loved, to be the food of vile worms, and lie mouldering in the silent grave. Nor is that all; the grave is the land of oblivion; and who does not shrink from the thought of being forgotten? We may be remembered some little time within the family circle, and now and then a

sigh may be heaved over our memory, and now and then a tear may be dropped on our grave; but ere many years we shall be forgotten by all—even though the grave may not close over us as the waters over a sinking ship, that in going down makes a surging swell, but soon leaves the billows to pursue their course, or the placid sea to become smooth again. Then who but shrinks from the thought of being torn from those he loves? of leaving the cheerful voices and bright countenances of his family circle to keep companionship with those dumb, grim tenants of the grave, that lie there for years, and centuries, but never exchange a word? Then God has made this body beautiful; and I do not like to see the sad ravages that age, still less the awful ruin that death works on us. Then God has made me to love life; and I love it; the bright sky; the song of the birds; merry voices; cheerful faces; nor do I like to think of being laid in that narrow, black pit among yellow skulls and mouldering bones. Profess what men like, flesh and blood shrink from that. Nor, believe me, is there any mere earth-born and earth-supported power that can stand by an open grave, and look down to speak of it, as a bed of sweet and peaceful rest.

Besides these sad imaginings, the sufferings that usually attend the close of life and gather like heavy clouds around its setting sun, make death a curse. Some are, so to speak, translated like Enoch. Last evening, on the street, at his post of duty, amid his family, the good man "was;" the chariot with silent wheels comes to his door at the dead of night; he is

borne away before he has time to wake; never tasting death, he is in glory before he knows, and is woke to consciousness, not by the song of birds that welcome in the spring, but of angels welcoming him to the presence of his Saviour and to the glories of heaven: and they tell how next morning they found the body lying calm in death—"He was not, for God took him." Happy fate to a true believer! notwithstanding that in the beautiful litany of the Church of England they pray, "from plague and pestilence, from battle, murder, and *sudden death*, good Lord, deliver us." But such cases are rare. In the ordinary providence of God many weary days and nights precede the closing scene. Anticipate it! Think what agonies may then rack our frame! and how our last hours may resemble those of one in combat with an invisible enemy, that with hand clutching his throat, is choking him! In most cases, death presents the unmistakable features of a tremendous curse; being attended with sufferings which, however unpleasant to think of, it is well to anticipate, that we may be prepared for the worst, and, fortified by faith, may stand the rude shocks of dissolution, possessing our souls in patience and in peace. And where faith in Jesus raises a dying man above the sufferings of nature, and a sinful man above the terrors of guilt, illuminating the closing scene with the hopes and very light of approaching glory, this close of life is the grandest of sunsets. Nowhere, does religion look so magnificent as amid such scenes. And never does she seem so triumphant as when, with her fingers closing the filmy eyes, she contemplates the peaceful corpse;

and bending down to take one fond kiss of pallid lips, or marble brow, rises, and raising her hands to heaven, exclaims, Blessed are the dead! The battle done; the victory won; rest, warrior! workman! pilgrim!—rest! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

II. Death is a blessing.

How true these words—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!" Die in the Lord! That is a remarkable expression; but one that corresponds with others in the word of God. For example: the apostle Paul sometimes speaks of us "being in the Lord," and sometimes of the Lord "being in us." He says, for instance, "Christ in us the hope of glory." Elsewhere also he uses this remarkable expression: "Nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Now, whether the expression be, that "Christ is in us," or that "we are in Christ," the meaning is thus far the same, that both expressions are used to describe that intimate, spiritual, indissoluble, eternal union which is formed by faith between the Saviour and the saved. A union that, more intimate than marriage which unfaithfulness in either party dissolves; a union that, more intimate than the connection between body and soul which a slight accident may endanger, which an ounce of lead, an inch of steel, a drop of poison, a wrong step, the hand of a child may dissolve; a union that, more intimate than binds together those sections of the church which, though differing, co-operate.

The union which is formed between Christ and his people being one of *incorporation*, and not one merely of *co-operation* what the one is, the other is; and where the one is, the other is; and as the one feels, the other feels; and as our bodies and their limbs have blood in common, or the branches and trunk of a tree have sap in common, so Jesus and his people have all things in common. "All mine is thine," he says—his Father, ours; his merit, ours; his righteousness, ours; his victory, ours; his glory, ours. A rich inheritance indeed! And as we were in Adam on that day when, standing by the fatal tree, and before the beautiful temptress, he took of fruit forbidden, and ate, and sinned, and fell, all of us falling in his fall; so, on that other and better day, when the Son of Man stood by another tree, giving his hands to the nails, and his side to the spear, and his brow to the thorns, and his soul to the wrath of God due for sin, we were in him. As I was condemned in Adam on the day of the fall, a believer in Christ, in him I satisfied divine justice before earth and heaven; in him I triumphed on the cross; in him, on the third day of burial, I left the tomb, rising in anticipation of the hour when the dead shall wake to the sound of the trumpet; and, rising in Christ, mortal shall put on immortality, and those whom once Satan conquered, and sin enslaved, shall be crowned with victory.

To be in Christ, therefore, to be in the Lord, implies that we shall infallibly enjoy all the blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which he shed his blood to purchase; these being secured to us by the great oath

of God, and the bonds of a covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. What more could we have; could we wish for than this? To be in Christ is to be in his Father's bosom, to be his beloved children—all sin forgiven—sure of the supply of every want on earth; and sure of heaven at last; for where the head is, all the members of the body shall sooner or later be. With Christ we shall be crowned and throned in glory.

Well then may the apostle say, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!" They are blessed. They must be blessed. How can it be otherwise? "Die!" No doubt they must die; but death has lost its sting; and it does not matter when, or how, or where they die. The dying is nothing, if they are in the Lord; whether they die in their bed, among holy prayers and blessed voices; or die in battle, amid thundering cannon; or die like a martyr, swinging in the air; or die whelmed in the deep, with the rush of waters in their drowning ears. Dying in the Lord, they are blessed. It has proved a comfort to a sinking child, to feel a kind mother's arms around it; to expire with its head resting on her bosom. And when candles burned dim and the mists of death were gathering thick over the eyes, I have heard the dying, unable to see, ask if some loved one was near; and I have felt their hand grasp my own, as if, on passing through the deep waters, there was some stay even in a human hand. But oh! in that coming hour, may God give us to feel that we have a firm hold of Christ; that our head is lying on his blessed bosom; that his own kind

hand is wiping away nature's last, bitter tears! Beyond the tender accents of a mother's, or wife's, or child's, or any human voice, oh! how blessed it will be to hear Jesus whispering, "Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not afraid, for I am thy God." We may be ready to shrink back, saying, Ah, Lord! the water is dark; the stream is cold, and deep! How blessed then to hear him say, Go forward; fear not. I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour.

Believer, let the world shrink from death—not you. Familiarize your mind with that inevitable event! Think of it, as life! Gloomy though the portal seems, death is the gate of life to a good and pious man. Think of it, therefore, not as death, but as glory—going to heaven and to your father. Regard it in the same light as the good man who said when I expressed my sorrow to see him sinking into the grave, "I am going home." If you will think of it as death, then let it be as the death of sin; the death of pain; the death of fear; the death of care; the death of Death. Regard its pangs and struggles as the battle that goes before victory; its troubles as the swell of the sea on heaven's happy shore; and yon gloomy passage as the cypress-shaded avenue that shall conduct your steps to heaven. It is life through Christ, and life in Christ; life most blissful, and life evermore. How

much happier and holier we should be if we could look on death in that light. I have heard people say, that we should think each morning that we may be dead before night; and each night that we may be dead before morning! True: yet how much better to think every morning, I may be in heaven before night; and every night that the head is laid on the pillow, and the eyes are closed for sleep, to think, Next time I open them it may be to look on Jesus, and the land where there is no night, nor morning; nor sunset, nor cloud; nor grave, nor grief; nor sin, nor death, nor sorrow; nor toil, nor trouble; where "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.

III. Death is a blessing as introducing us into a state of rest.

1. At death the believer rests from the toils of life.

Not that a moderate measure of labour, either of the hands or of the brain, is a curse; or even a misfortune from which we should desire exemption. Other creatures, as well as man, have to earn their bread; some in the air, where from morn to dewy eve the swallow is on the wing; some in pastures, where herds of cattle roam from field to field, and herds of deer from hill to hill; some in the waters, whose silvery tenants flash through stream and pool; and some beneath the soil, where the mole, mining in darkness, like death, shews his progress by the mounds he throws up. And like them, our bodies were made for working, as our brains were for thinking, our eyes for seeing, and our ears for hearing. Nor is the workman's life the

least agreeable; if toil has its hardships, it has its advantages—in health, for instance, strong in frames accustomed to labour, and glowing in cheeks that are kissed by the winds and browned by the sun of heaven.

> Come hither, ye that press your beds of down,
> And sleep not: see him sweating o'er his bread
> Before he eats it. 'Tis the primal curse
> But softened into mercy: made the pledge
> Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan.

Yet, though labor is the best medicine for health, the best stimulant for a happy humour, the best opiate for sleep; and though fullness of bread and abundance of idleness, the curse of Sodom, is a danger from which the upper classes, and many, indeed, who are exempt from the necessity of working for their daily bread need to protect themselves by devoting their time to the cause of philanthropy, or some department of the public service, death brings a happy relief to those whose hard and humble lot chain them like slaves to the oar of toil. Their circumstances doom many to such excess of labour as exhausts the energies both of body and mind. Little better than animated machines, they live to work, and work to live, their minds lying, like waste land, uncultivated—like a gold mine with no time to dig it. The book, the very Bible, at evening worship, drops from the weary hand, and drowsiness steals over the senses of one who kneels for mercy at the throne of grace. Such toils degrade the higher part of our nature, if they do not make life a burden; and while they make the Sabbath,

with its rest, a precious boon to thousands, they unfit us for its lively enjoyment. From these death discharges the weary labourer, and brings him welcome relief. A child of God, he enters into rest. To him in the grave "there is rest for the weary;" and what a blessed change to the pious occupant of many a humble, country cottage, of dingy room in the obscure lanes of the crowded city, when the head, once bent over the soil, or the loom, shall be lifted up and crowned with glory among the acclamations of angels, and in the presence of God. Hope of better things, and submission to your father's will—teaching you to say with Paul, I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content—work on without repining, now and then lifting your eye to heaven! Death's cold, clammy sweat, is the last that shall stand on a good man's brow. Son of toil, when thou hast breathed out thy life, thy work is done, and an eternal Sabbath begun!

2. At death the believer rests from the cares of life. Next to sin, these form life's heaviest burden. Money is a cure for poverty, and medicine for sickness; time closes grief's bleeding wounds; peace sends the soldier home; and when the bell strikes, the labourer drops his tools, and, in sports or books, or company, or among his prattling children, forgets awhile his toil—when the day's work is done, it is done. But cares are bosom burdens which we carry with us. Their spring is in the heart, and they rise like water to fill the well anew so soon as it is emptied.

People complain of providence, and are discontented

with their lot. It is so full of cares! It is not their lot, but themselves that are full of cares. We blame God for evils which we ourselves create, like the child whose fears create the spectres that give terror to a dark bedroom, and chase away sleep. Would we lie in the bosom of Providence as confidingly as a child in its mother's, had we such faith as God encourages us to cherish, we would shake off our cares as a lark does the dew drops from her feathers; or a lion the dew from his mane. If God had thrown up the helm and left the management of our fortunes to us, or if Christ had gone to sleep in heaven as he did in the boat on the sea of Galilee, or if the rising of every sun in the east, and the swelling of every tide on the shore, if the lightsome song of every little bird, and the beautiful dress of every little flower, as it steps out on this world, did not proclaim the providence and care of God, we might and must carry the burden of our own cares. But the Lord reigneth! We are to cast our cares on him; and the more we lay on him, the more shall we find that his promises and faithfulness possess that remarkable property of the arch, by virtue of which the more the arch is loaded, the firmer it stands.

How strange that any who can trust God's mercy for their eternal salvation should not be able to trust his providence for daily bread; for blessings he bestows even on the wicked and ungodly! If "God spared not his own son, shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" There is a logic in that question, level to the humblest understanding; and a

love that should make us careful for nothing. But faith is often weak, and man is fearful; and so our life has many a troubled dream that fills those with fears and terrors who are all the while safely folded in a Father's arms. Like ghosts, these shall vanish when the morning breaks, and we enter on eternal day. There will be nothing in the household above to withdraw Martha from sitting with her sister at Jesus' feet —there Jacob mourns no Joseph, and David weeps no Absolom; the pious widow dreads no empty barrel; Lazarus fears no rich man's frown, nor courts his favour; the ungodly wring no tears from the eyes of Paul, nor is he burdened with the care of churches; nor mother with the care of infants; nor fathers with the care of families; nor merchants with the cares of business. The cares of the journey belong to the road. They cease when we arrive at home.

3. At death the believer rests from the griefs of life.

God's people are often sorely tried. No wonder He intends them for great honours; and so he puts a great deal of work on them. By successive trials they are thus cleansed from all the scum and dregs of sin; that they may be thoroughly purified, they are emptied, as it were, from vessel to vessel. Through their sufferings he baptizes them with the Holy Ghost as with fire; dealing with them as the jeweller with gold that, intended for no vulgar use, and set with diamonds, and rubies, and emeralds, and pearls, and all manner of precious stones, is to form the framework of a crown. He purifies that seven times in the fire. And "many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord will

deliver him out of them ;" if never before, at death. Death cures all griefs ; and his own best physic and physician, he applies the most healing balm to the wounds his own hands have made. For "to be absent from the body" is not only "to be present with the Lord," but with those friends of ours, and friends of his whom death had snatched from our reluctant arms. The dying seldom weep even when all around them are dissolved in tears ; the dead in Christ never. They weep for the dead no more. Why should they ? Death has restored them to their society ; and how pleasant to think of being again united to those we loved on earth ; and of embracing, after years of separation, our parents, our brothers, and sisters, and children, and dear friends, all unchanged, but that they are more lovely and more loving. The brightest prospect a parent can cherish for his children, the happiest end he can work, and pray, and toil for, is not to see them great but good ; heirs, not of estates, but "of the kingdom ;" to meet them all in heaven—the storms and dangers of life past, every one of that scattered fleet, one after another, entering the port, and all at length safely anchored in the desired haven.

Between many believers and the full happiness of those that die in the Lord, there may be much suffering ; much toil and trouble before entering on the promised rest. The steepest part of a hill is commonly nearest the top. The green sward, the gentle slopes, the bubbling springs, with their bright mossy carpets, the grateful songs and shade of woods lie below ; while up by the summit the air is keen, the vege-

tation dwarfed and scanty, and the steep severe. Panting, with short steps and shorter breath, the traveller climbs upward to find the last part of the journey the hardest; and as he throws himself down on the summit, he welcomes its grateful rest. It is so with life. Old age, with its flagging spirits and short, feeble steps, with its torpid faculties and growing infirmities, with losses that have each left a wound in our hearts, and griefs that have each drawn a furrow on our brow, is, unless sustained by the consolations and hopes of religion, a dark and dreary time. Yet good people wish to be spared to old age, and many aged saints have rejoiced in their recovery; and clung to life, when it was little desirable, like trees that take a stronger hold of the naked rock than of a fertile soil. Strange! since old age, bereft of the briskness of youth and strength of manhood, is apt to become stale, flat, and unprofitable; and, unless grace corrects its tendencies, like old wine, grows sour. Men talk of venerable ruins, and admire old castles, and hoary, mouldering trees; and affections may cling to the human ruin, close and green, and beautiful as the ivy which mantles some crumbling tower; yet it is sad to see man's noble form bent with decrepitude, strength changed into tottering weakness, the fire quenched in the eye, perhaps the eclipse of reason, and the second childhood that excites a melancholy smile. Happy was Moses, on whose head one hundred and twenty winters had shed no snows; blending the wisdom of age with the spirit of youth, he was an old man without the usual infirmities of years: so that on the day of his

death "his eye was not dim, neither was his natural strength abated."

Some, their sun setting at noon, escape the pains and infirmities that cloud the evening of life; but few escape those dying troubles that break like a rough swell on the shores of the better land, and make many shrink back from entering them who have a good hope of heaven. Our text, thank God, has virtues to deprive these of their terrors; and work such change as man's invention works on the heavy rollers that beat the coasts of Africa, and threaten to swamp the stoutest boats that venture to the shore. However smooth the sea along the coast, and someway off land, close in shore, in the calmest day, great white breakers line the beach; defending it, and deterring the weary voyager from a land, whose green and graceful foliage tempts him ashore, and whose fragrant spices float out to him on the wings of gentle winds. But how to land in safety? It can be done;—is done. The boat is cautiously brought up to the edge of the roaring swell; then from its bows they empty a vessel of oil on the angry deep. Borne landward, what a wondrous change it works! The surge goes down before it; it forms a smooth, and glassy, and narrow passage to the shore; and, with breakers on either hand, roaring in thunders, and foaming in impotent rage, the boat leaps forward to the bending oars, glides along the surface of this strip of calm sea, and but softly heaved on the bosom of a gentle swell, is run up in safety on the beach. Even so may death be disarmed of terrors, the sight of which is so apt to cool our eagerness to reach the blessed land.

The hope of a man-child bore the Hebrew mother bravely through her pangs. Liberty has been considered an ample recompense for all the blood, and suffering amid which it was born. The relief which we expect to follow some most painful operation has made the patient impatient for the hour; and enabled him to bear its tortures without a cry or groan. And he prepares himself to endure the sufferings of a dying hour, and prepares for himself an easy landing on the shores of heaven, who learns to regard death, in the light of my text, as an introduction to the rest that remaineth to the people of God. No more true or beautiful way of announcing a good man's death than the old-fashioned phrase, He is at rest! Holy in his life, and blessed in his death, he is joined to the multitude of whom the elder said, THESE ARE THEY WHICH CAME OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION, AND HAVE WASHED THEIR ROBES, AND MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB. THEREFORE ARE THEY BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD, AND SERVE HIM DAY AND NIGHT IN HIS TEMPLE: AND HE THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE SHALL DWELL AMONG THEM. THEY SHALL HUNGER NO MORE, NEITHER SHALL THE SUN LIGHT ON THEM, NOR ANY HEAT. FOR THE LAMB WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE SHALL FEED THEM, AND SHALL LEAD THEM UNTO LIVING FOUNTAINS OF WATERS: AND GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES.

THE END.